

WE DID IT: HCV MICROELIMINATION IN PENITENTIARY INSTITUTIONS OF ARMEIA

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Background: The PMC began its activities in September 2019 and one of its primary objectives was to monitor and control the epidemiological situation in penitentiary institutions. 'SOP-screening' was developed and implemented, providing rapid screening for HCV/HBV/HIV/Syphilis, combined with pre- and post-test counselling, targeted education on blood-borne infection prevention. In April 2022 DAAs became available to incarcerated individuals. At baseline, 14.7%(n=347/2360) were anti-HCVAb-positive, 8.94%(n=211/2360) were HCV RNA-positive. Following structured educational interventions, treatment readiness and motivation were consistently high.

Description of model of care/intervention/program: Our Model of care was designed on the principle of delivering maximum effectiveness with limited resources. It is based on WHO and national guidelines, relevant local legal acts. It consists of 11 clearly defined sequential processes embedded in a comprehensive SOP ('SOP-screening' became part of it). SOP includes two parts: the first describes each process in detail, outlining step-by-step actions for healthcare workers, while the second defines the roles/responsibilities of each healthcare worker throughout the care continuum. This structured approach ensures transparency and high effectiveness of the model, while also allowing for an individualized approach to each case.

Effectiveness: By the end of 2025, 2962 HCV RNA tests were performed, 17,79%(n=527/2962) were RNA-positive. 488 individuals received DAA treatment., while 39 were released prior to treatment initiation. Among these 488, 4 had HBV/HCV, 8 had HIV/HCV (on ARV), 63 were PWID, and 48 were receiving OAT. SVR assessment was completed in 70,90%(n=346/488), achieving an SVR=98.84%(n=342/346).

Conclusion and next steps: Hepatitis C has been eliminated across all 10 penitentiary institutions in Armenia. Recorded cases are only among newly admitted incarcerated. The next phase is sustainability: maintaining continuous entry screening and treatment to prevent transmission.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: None