

# A novel hepatitis C intervention in Denmark to test and treat people who inject drugs

Lazarus JV<sup>1</sup>, Øvrehus A<sup>2</sup>, Demant J<sup>3</sup>, Krohn-Deli L<sup>4,5</sup>,  
Weis N, van der Veen J<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), Hospital Clínic, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, <sup>2</sup>Odense University Hospital, Denmark, <sup>3</sup>Users Academy, Copenhagen, Denmark, <sup>4</sup>Copenhagen University Hospital, Hvidovre, Department of Infectious Diseases, Denmark, <sup>5</sup>Department of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

**Professor Jeffrey V Lazarus [Jeffrey.Lazarus@ISGlobal.org]**

Associate Research Professor, ISGlobal, Hospital Clínic  
Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of Barcelona  
Vice-chair, EASL International Liver Foundation

# BACKGROUND

## What we know

- Providing hepatitis C virus (HCV) care for people who inject drugs (PWID) is critical in eliminating HCV.
- Reaching PWID with traditional healthcare services can be challenging.
- Combining point-of-care (PoC) testing with peer support and counselling is a model of care (MoC) that can be effective for PWID.

## What we do not know

- Can a mobile van equipped with rapid PoC tests for HCV antibodies (Ab) and RNA simplify testing and linkage to care for PWID?

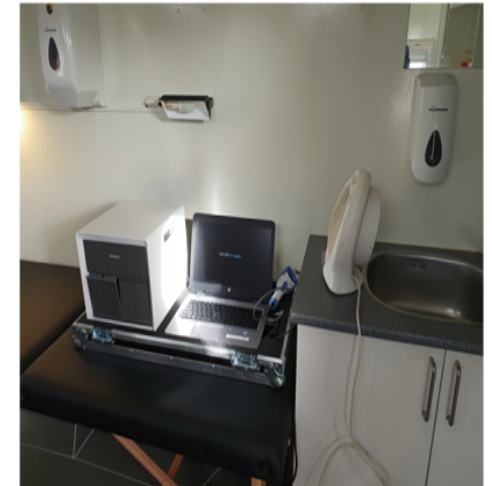
# DESCRIPTION OF MODEL OF CARE

- In Copenhagen, Denmark, a peer-led mobile service providing HCV Ab testing (In-Tech™), counselling and linkage to care was equipped with PoC HCV-RNA finger-prick tests (Xpert HCV Viral Load Finger-Stick Point-of-Care Assay, Cepheid).
- Eligible HCV-RNA+ individuals were offered assisted referral to a fast-track hospital clinic for treatment, with peer support as needed.

Brugernes Akademi's mobile van in Copenhagen



Finger-prick test



Gene Xpert inside the mobile van

# EFFECTIVENESS

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- From 1 May 2019 to 22 April 2021, 774 people were tested for HCV-RNA and 9% (n=72) were positive.
- Of those with an active infection, 88% (n=63) were evaluated at the hospital clinic and 76% (n=55) initiated direct-acting antiviral (DAA) therapy.
- Of the latter, 25% (n=14) were connected to drug treatment services.
- The main reasons for not being evaluated for treatment were being undocumented and being lost to follow-up.
- Nine additional individuals with an active HCV infection contacted the service to be linked to care.
- The peer-led service assisted all those treated with communication with the hospital nurse, collecting medicine and accompaniment to follow-up visits.

# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

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- We found that a peer-led mobile PoC service is an MoC that can engage PWID in HCV testing and link them to treatment, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Being an undocumented migrant was a major cause for not accessing care, which poses a challenge for HCV elimination in Denmark due to the risk of onward transmission.
- The next steps include engaging with health authorities in order to provide care for undocumented migrants.

# DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST STATEMENT

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