

# Cascade of HCV care among people who inject drugs in Athens, Greece: ARISTOTLE HCV-HIV programme

Sypsa V<sup>1</sup>, Papadopoulos N<sup>2</sup>, Cholongitas E<sup>3</sup>, Hounta A<sup>4</sup>, Savvanis S<sup>5</sup>, Ioannidou P<sup>6</sup>, Deutch M<sup>7</sup>, Papageorgiou M<sup>6</sup>, Manolakopoulos S<sup>7</sup>, Sevastianos V<sup>8</sup>, Kapatais A<sup>9</sup>, Vlachogiannakos J<sup>6</sup>, Mela M<sup>10</sup>, Elefsiniotis J<sup>11</sup>, Vrakas S<sup>12</sup>, Karagiannakis D<sup>7</sup>, Iliopoulos P<sup>13</sup>, Roussos S<sup>1</sup>, Haikalis S<sup>13</sup>, Ploiarchopoulou F<sup>4</sup>, Paraskevis D<sup>1</sup>, Psychogiou M<sup>3</sup>, Kalamitsis G<sup>14</sup>, Papatheodoridis G<sup>6</sup>, Hatzakis A<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Hygiene, Epidemiology and Medical Statistics, Medical School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece, <sup>2</sup>1st Department of Internal Medicine, Medical School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Laiko General Hospital, Athens, Greece, <sup>3</sup>Western Attica General Hospital "Agia Varvara", Athens, Greece, <sup>4</sup>General Hospital of Athens "Elpis", Athens, Greece, <sup>5</sup>17 Army Share Fund Hospital of Athens, Athens, Greece, <sup>6</sup>Department of Gastroenterology, Medical School of National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Laiko General Hospital, Athens, Greece, <sup>7</sup>4th General University Hospital "Attikon", Athens, Greece, <sup>8</sup>Hippokration General Hospital, Athens, Greece, <sup>9</sup>Evangelismos General Hospital, Athens, Greece, <sup>10</sup>Tzaneion General Hospital of Piraeus, Piraeus, Greece, <sup>11</sup>Gastroenterology, Evangelismos-Ophthalmiatrion Athinon-Polykliniki Hospitals, Athens, Greece, <sup>12</sup>Faculty of Nursing Athens, General and Oncology Hospital "Agii Anargyri", National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece, <sup>13</sup>Hellenic Scientific Society for the Study of AIDS Sexually Transmitted and Emerging Diseases, Athens, Greece, <sup>14</sup>Hellenic Liver Patient Association "Prometheus", Greece

# Acknowledgement

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# Background & aim

In Athens, Greece:

- Approximately 6,882 people with high risk drug use [2018 estimate]
- HCV prevalence among persons accessing drug treatment programs in 2018: 66%
- The largest recent HIV outbreak among PWID (2011-2013)

## **Aim:**

**To increase** diagnosis of HCV infection, linkage and retention to HCV care/treatment in the population of People Who Inject Drugs (PWID) in Athens, Greece

# Challenges

1

Reaching a hard-to-reach population  
High coverage - Reach those in most need  
(active PWID, not linked to other services)

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2

Linkage to HCV care

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3

Retention in HCV treatment

# Addressing these challenges in Athens, Greece

## ARISTOTLE HCV-HIV program

### **Duration of the program:**

April 2018 - March 2020 (discontinued due to COVID-19)

### **Target population:**

PWID  $\geq 18$  years old living in Athens

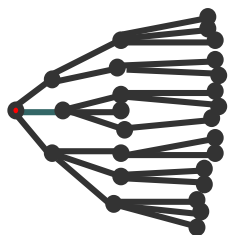
1

# Reaching a hard-to-reach population

High coverage - Reach those in most need  
(active PWID, not linked to other services)



Community-based (in the centre of Athens)



Peer-driven recruitment: chain referral from members of the target population (RDS)



Multiple recruitment rounds → PWID have the chance to participate multiple times



Incentives → rapid recruitment, high coverage, reach deep into the network of PWID

## 2

# Linkage to HCV care



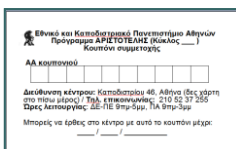
All necessary procedures performed on-site in a single visit



Patients are entered to the national chronic hepatitis C registry for treatment approval



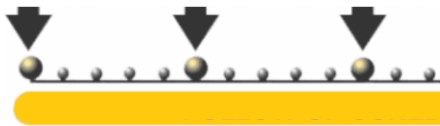
A network of collaborating clinicians is set up and visit the study site – Peer navigator assists patients



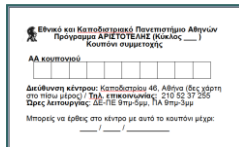
Monetary incentives

# 3

## Retention in HCV treatment



Follow-up of patients during treatment



Monetary incentives



Counseling



# Characteristics of ARISTOTLE participants

**1,635 participants - 1,943 visits**

**75%** active PWID

**27%** homeless

**77%** not linked to opioid substitution treatment programs

**82% population coverage** based on the official population size estimate of **active PWID**

# **HCV infection at first participation**

**76.4% anti-HCV(+)**

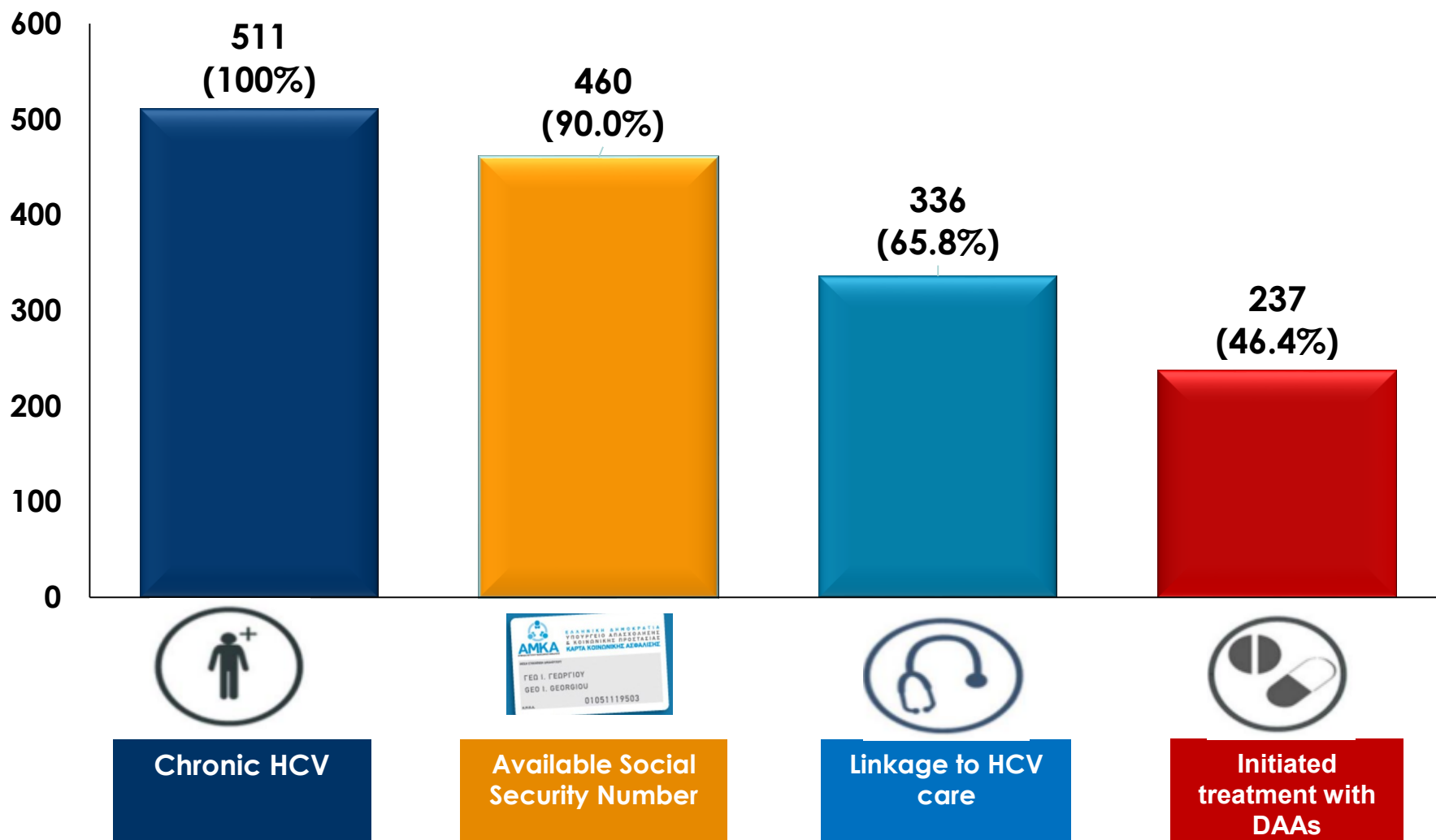
→ 15.2% were HCV/HIV coinfectected.

**84% of anti-HCV(+) with chronic HCV**

- Of those, 511 fulfilled the treatment criteria of that period & without HIV infection

# The impact of ARISTOTLE HIV-HCV program: Cascade of HCV care

(for PWID with HCV monoinfection who fulfilled treatment criteria)



# Discussion

- ARISTOTLE HCV-HIV was successful in reaching rapidly a population of PWID most at risk (current injectors, homeless, low OST coverage) and in increasing diagnosis and linkage to HCV care.
- Key elements:

**Community-based**

**Peer-driven recruitment**

**Testing and linkage to HCV care provided on-site with the help of clinicians and dedicated staff/peer navigators**

# Funding & disclosure of interest

- ARISTOTLE HCV-HIV program was funded by Gilead Sciences, Abbvie, MSD and the Hellenic Scientific Society for the Study of AIDS STDs and Emerging Diseases.
- ARISTOTLE HCV-HIV was conducted under the auspices of the City of Athens and the Organization Against Drugs (OKANA).
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