

# STIGMA IN THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HEPATITIS C: AN EVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT ANALYSIS

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## Background:

There is very limited women-focused hepatitis C virus (HCV) research despite globally increasing rates of HCV among women. We sought to utilize Rodgers' evolutionary method for concept analysis to evaluate stigma within the context of women living with HCV. A formal concept analysis examines concepts for their semantic structure, aiming to refine and clarify concepts for use in theory, practice, and research through the formulation of theoretical and operational definitions. Analyzing stigma within the context of women living with HCV is critical for developing destigmatizing approaches to care that support women's physical and emotional well-being.

## Methods:

A search of databases was used to identify relevant articles. The combination of subject headings 'hepatitis C AND stigma AND women' were utilized for the search criteria. Articles from peer-reviewed journals published between 2002-2022 were included. Rodgers' evolutionary method was used to analyze articles with a focus on the concept's context, surrogate and related terms, antecedents, attributes, examples, and consequences.

## Results:

Screening protocols identified 17 articles for inclusion in the analysis. Surrogate and related terms to stigma identified in the literature were discrimination and marginalization. The antecedents of stigma for women living with HCV were identified as limited knowledge, receiving a diagnosis, and disclosure. Prevalent attributes of stigma in the literature were feelings of decreased self-worth, negative stereotyping, and fear of transmission. Stigmatization of women living with HCV resulted in negative consequences to relationships and healthcare access due to decreased health-seeking behaviours.

## Conclusion:

This analysis identified that stigma associated with HCV in women stands apart from other forms of infectious disease-related stigma, primarily due to its associations with injection drug use and transactional intercourse. This understanding of stigma among women with HCV can inform better healthcare interactions, combat stigma in the healthcare system, and support HCV elimination goals.

## Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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