

Hepatitis C infections in Opioid-dependent Patients (HepCOP1): A representative survey on the state of care in the canton of Zurich

Katja Schulthess (1), Kristyna Valkova (1), Dimitri Hauri (2), Lucas M. Bachmann (2), Johann Steurer (2), André Seidenberg (1)

1 Institute Hausarztmedizin University of Zürich,

2 Horten Centre University of Zürich

Background: Evidence and various guidelines (e.g. National Institute of Health, 2002) recommend antiviral treatment for opioid-dependent patients with chronic Hepatitis C (CHC). The objective of our study was to assess how many of the opioid-dependent patients in the canton of Zurich (ZH) were appropriately tested and treated for CHC.

Methods: The survey included a representative sample of all patients on opioid maintenance treatment (OMT) in ZH. We developed a questionnaire to collect information from patient's charts (demographic data, laboratory tests, antiviral treatment).

Results: 63 physicians or institutions (18% of OMT providers in ZH) participated in this study. They care for 1575 patients, which represents 43 % of all patients on OMT in ZH. 279 randomly selected patient's charts were analyzed. In 197 (70.6%) cases HCV antibodies were tested; among them 113 (57.4%) were positive and 84 (42.6%) were negative. In 82 (29.4%) charts no HCV antibody testing was found and in 67 (24.0%) not even liver enzymes were determined. 88 of the 113 HCV infected patients were positive for HCV-RNA-PCR, none were negative; in 25 cases no PCR-results were found. Genotype 1 or 4 were identified in 29 (33%) cases, genotype 2 or 3 in 12 (13.6%) respectively; in 47 patient charts (53.4%) we did not find any genotype results. 15 patients received a treatment with interferon and ribavirine.

67 (24.0%) patients received less than minimal diagnostics even according to earlier guidelines. Also among HCV antibody positive patients, we found 72 (25.8%) patients who are not informed on chronicity of the infection (25) or about genotype (47).

Conclusions: In every second patient on OMT in ZH, the necessary tests were not performed to determine whether antiviral treatment should be offered. Measures to improve adequate testing for HCV are necessary.