

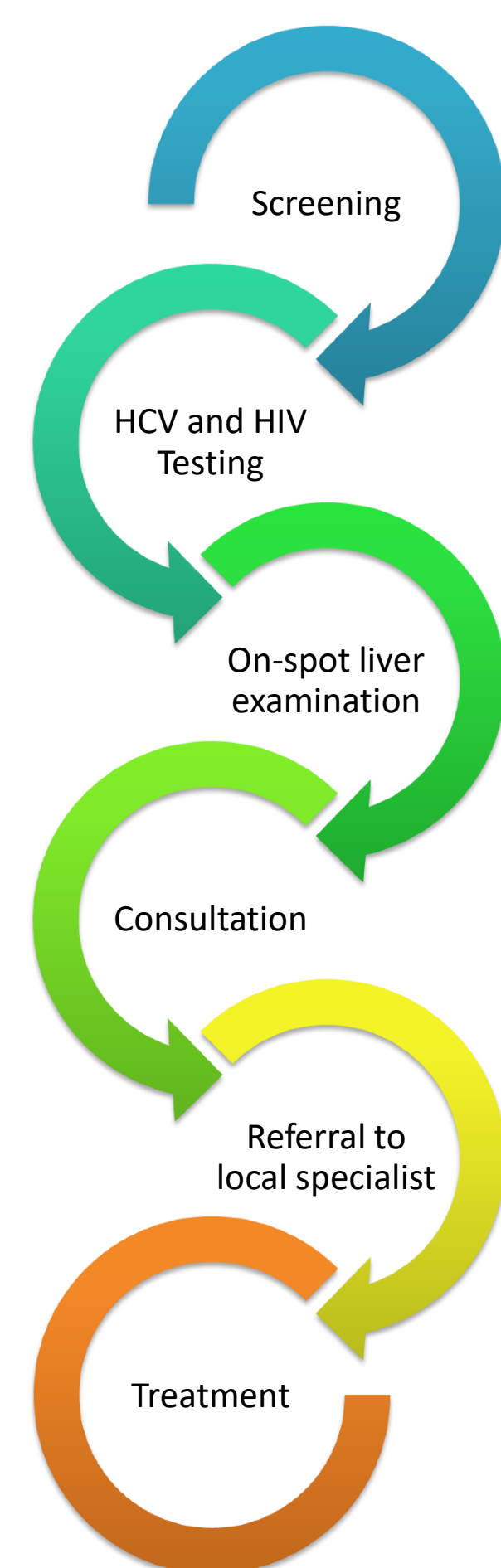


**Introduction**

In Croatia, COVID-19 pandemic limited activities related to the prevention, testing, and treatment of viral hepatitis in penalty institutions. Since it was not possible for outside collaborators to enter penal institutions, only 41 prisoners were tested for hepatitis and/or HIV. Throughout the 2020, 3 prisoners were treated for hepatitis C, and 7 prisoners underwent pre-therapeutic diagnostic processing.

**Objectives:**

Given the high HCV prevalence in prisons, screening and linkage-to-care is highly important so NGO Hepatos implemented an HCV pilot project within penalty institutions



**Methods:**

Hepatos has been providing services within the penalty system since 2009 as the only organization in the Western Balkans with a FibroScan® device as part of the MIHC mobile clinic.

In cooperation with the Croatian Gastroenterological Society and Public Health Institute Split-Dalmatia County, a project was implemented (June 2021 – December 2022) offering services to the 7 Croatian penalty institutions.

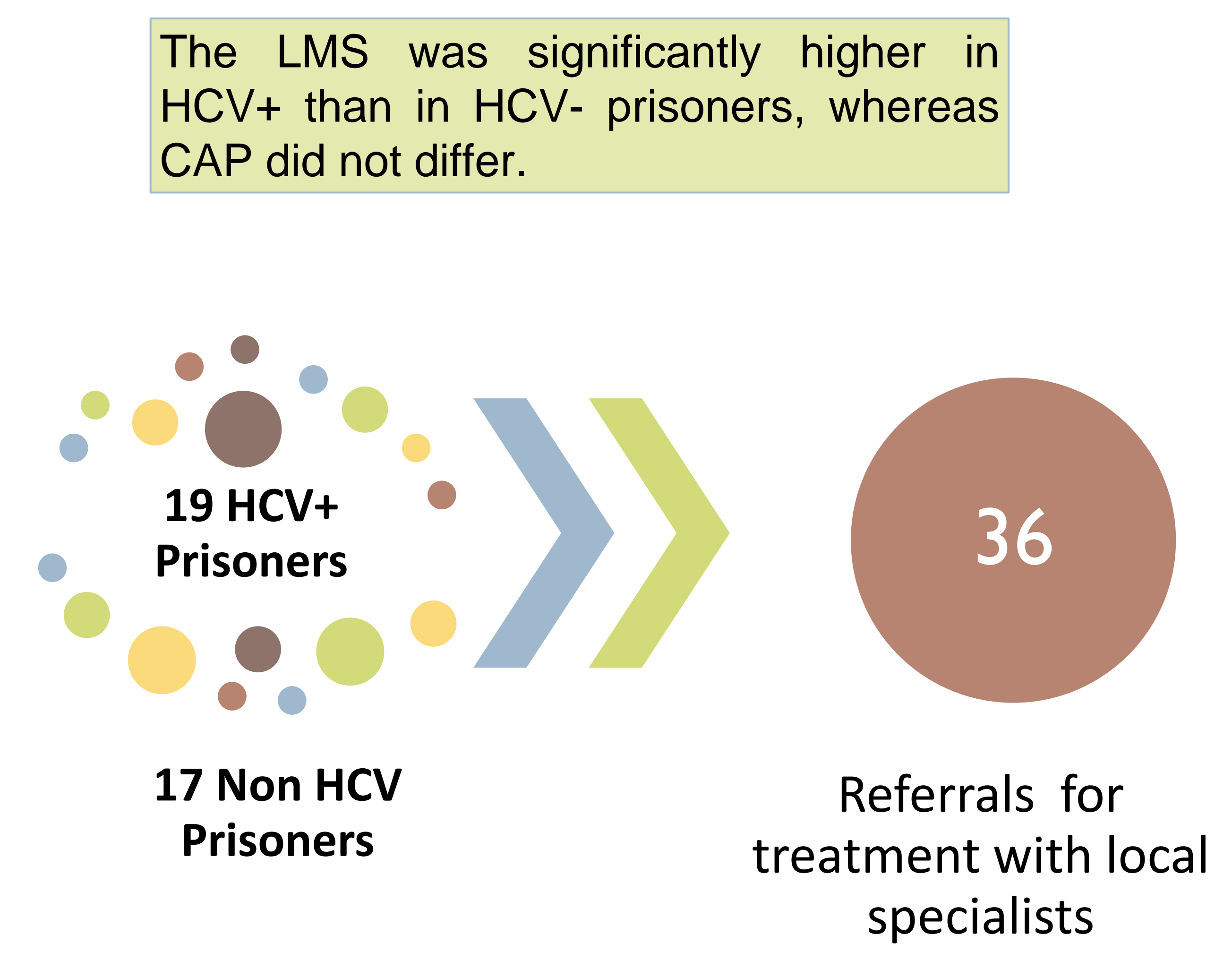
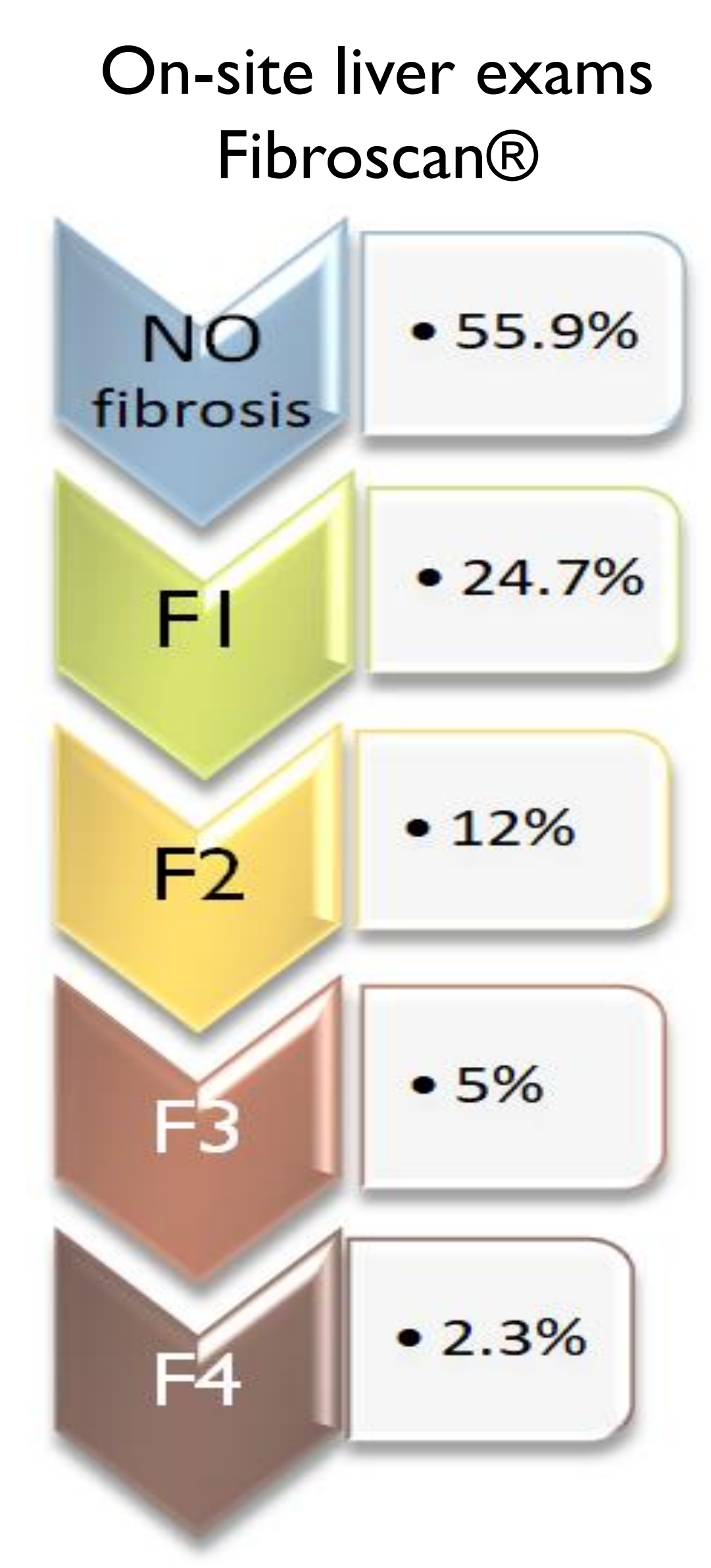
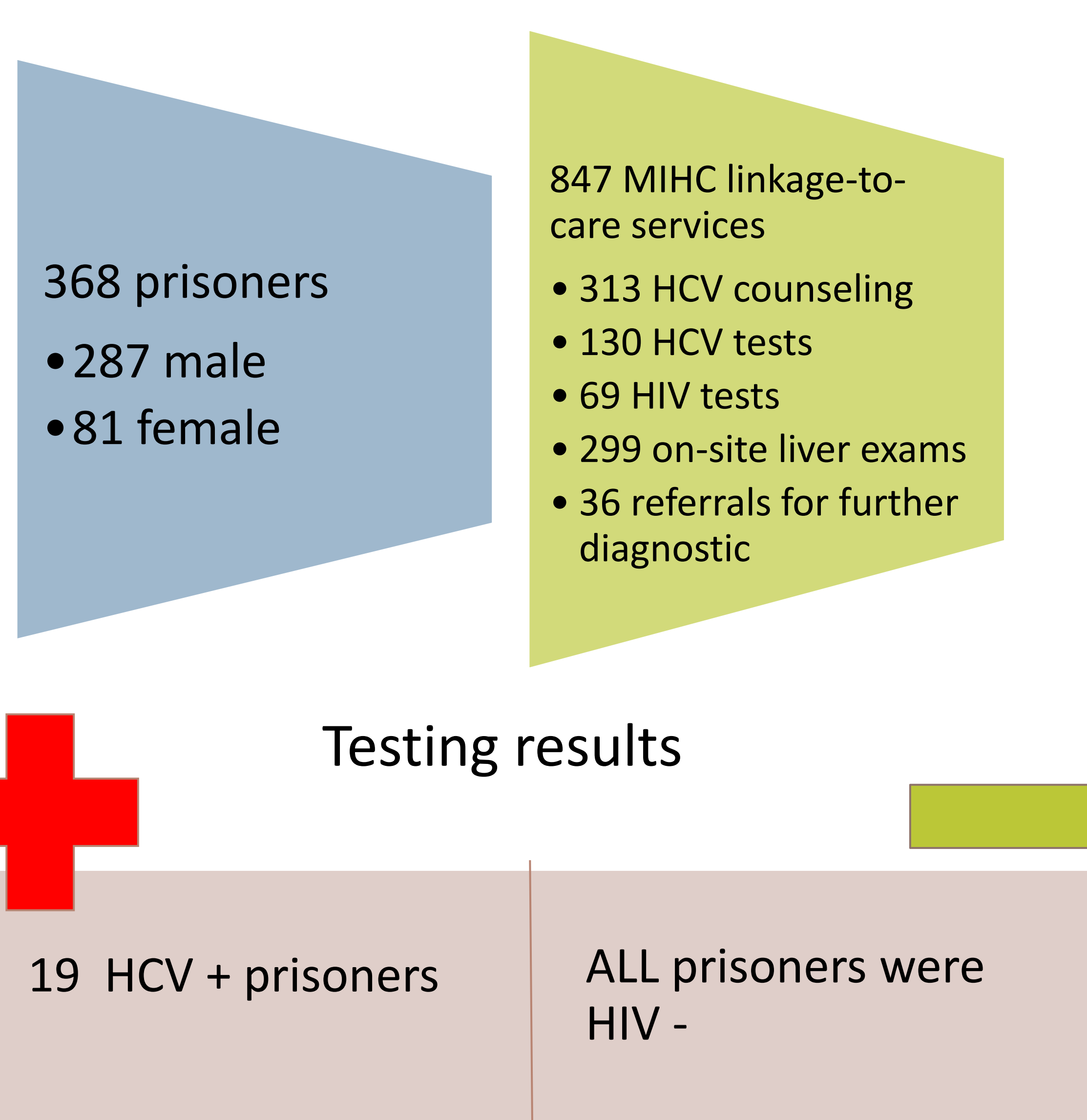
Services included: screening, HCV and/or HIV testing, on-spot liver examination by FibroScan®, consultation, and referral of HCV+ prisoners to local specialists for the diagnostic workup necessary for the treatment approval.

The Croatian Ministry of Justice granted consent for the project.

**On the road to HCV elimination: one step closer to WHO goal with linkage-to-care services in Croatian penalty institutions by Hepatos's mobile clinic named Mobile InfoHep Centre (MIHC)**



**Results**



**Conclusion:** The referral of prisoners to treating physicians represents a humble but vital contribution to the WHO's goal of HCV elimination. This linkage-to-care model brings change to HCV+ prisoners as it ensures that no one is left behind on our road to HCV elimination.

