

Pilot Study for the Implementation of Rapid HCV and HIV Tests in Harm Reduction Programmes for Intravenous Drug Users in Catalonia

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Introduction:

Drug users are at high risk of hepatitis C and HIV infection. Viral screening in this group is lower compared with other at risk populations. Early diagnosis improves treatment prognosis and allows interventions for behavior change.

Objective:

To assess acceptability and feasibility of rapid HIV and HCV tests in Harm Reduction Programmes (HRP) of Catalonia. To describe the percentage of intravenous drug users (IDU) with a reactive test who would attend hospital for test confirmation and follow up.

Methods:

Rapid oral test for HCV and HIV were offered to users of 13 HRP (5 street or mobile units, 6 fixed units and 2 mixed). Epidemiological data was collected and test performed and their results were monitored. Period study was between April and December of 2011. A short questionnaire was administered to staff at the end of the study period.

Results:

172 HCV and 198 HIV tests were performed, with a percentage of rejection of 1.7% and 10.4% respectively. 29.4% were exclusively IDU, 35.5% were IDU and drug consumers in other ways and 35% weren't IDU (Table 1). Global percentage of HCV reactive tests was 20.3% (11.3% in fixed HRP, 44.8% in mobile HRP and 32.1% in fixed centres with a mobile unit) (Table 2). Global percentage of HIV reactive tests was 2.5% (0.8% in fixed HRP, 4.3% in mobile HRP and 6.1% in fixed HRP with a mobile unit). From the 35 reactive HCV cases only 24 could be confirmed (68.6%), with 1 case of false negative. From the 5 HIV reactive cases only 2 could be confirmed (40%) with 1 false positive case. 100% of the staff found test performance and interpretation of the results easy or very easy and trusted the test result.

Table 1. Population description (240 people have accepted one or both tests).

	TOTAL	n	%
Median age: 35,6 (SD: 9,8%)			
Age groups	236		
<20		5	2,1%
20-29		74	31,4%
>30		157	66,5%
Gender: Male	238	174	73,1%
Immigrant	240	85	35,42%
Previous HIV test	232	189	81,5%
Previous HIV positive test	189	1	0,5%
Previous HCV test	228	178	78,1%
Previous HCV positive test	161	63	39,1%
Sexual orientation: Heterosexual	232	224	96,6%
STI in the last year	218	16	7,3%
Sex trade worker in the last year	224	15	6,7%
Intravenous drug use	230	139	60,4%
Daily frequency of injection	119	50	42,0%
Syringe sharing in the last consumption	137	10	7,3%
Sharing other injection equipment in the last consumption	131	29	22,1%
Front-backloading in the last consumption	119	10	8,4%
Sniffing	173	117	67,6%
Smoking	184	130	70,7%
Type of consumer	214		
Injector exclusive		63	29,4%
Injector and consumer in other ways		76	35,5%
Consumer no injector		75	35,0%

Table 2. Prevalence of HIV and HCV according the kind of HRP.

Kind of HR program	HIV test result			HCV test result		
	Reactive	Total	%reactives	Reactive	Total	%reactives
In a fixed center						
SAPS	0	13	0,0%	3	25	12,0%
CAS Lluís Companys	0	15	0,0%	2	14	14,3%
Arrels	0	24	0,0%	4	14	28,6%
CAS Mataró	0	38	0,0%	1	26	3,8%
CAS Vall Hebrón	0	23	0,0%	2	32	6,3%
Àmbit Prevenció	1	6	16,7%	1	4	25,0%
TOTAL	1	119	0,8%	13	115	11,3%
In a Mobile unit or street team						
Àmbit Gavà	0	8	0,0%	3	5	60,0%
Creu Roja TGN	0	8	0,0%	2	2	100,0%
AEC-GRIS	0	12	0,0%	2	7	28,6%
ASAUPAM	1	11	9,1%	4	7	57,1%
Cases Ocupades	1	7	14,3%	2	8	25,0%
TOTAL	2	46	4,3%	13	29	44,8%
In a fixed center + Mobile unit or street						
Sala Baluard	2	28	7,1%	9	24	37,5%
AIDE	0	5		0	4	
TOTAL	2	33	6,1%	9	28	32,1%
TOTAL	5	198	2,5%	35	172	20,3%

Figure 1. Some pictures of mobile units



Conclusions:

Acceptability of rapid HIV and HCV tests among HRP users was high. 24 HCV and 2 HIV cases were confirmed, with the highest percentage in mobile HRP. Usefulness of oral rapid tests in HRP was shown, especially in mobile HRP, wherein full blood tests are almost impossible to be carried out.