

HepCare Europe – HCV screening and linkage to care in key populations from the Romanian clinical site

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Background

HepCare Europe Project aims to enrich access to HCV screening, diagnosis and treatment in patients from key populations, by offering them integrated primary and secondary care services.

Objective: to evaluate epidemiological and clinical characteristics of HCV-positive patients.

Methods

Prospective study on HCV-positive patients enrolled in HepCare Project, at Victor Babes clinical site, Bucharest, between April 2016 and August 2018. HCV screening was performed using rapid oral tests (HepCheck) and those who tested positive were linked to care (HepLink).

Results

HepCheck flowchart



Distribution of HCV positivity among clinical sites

	Screened patients	HCV Ab (+) n (%)
OSC*	69	65 (94.2)
Health care facilities	104	80 (76.9)
Prisons	153	57 (37.2)
Night shelters	193	19 (9.8)
<i>p</i> value		<0.0001

*OSC=opioid substitution centers

Characteristics of HCV-positive patients

Characteristics	Total n=223
Male	n (%) 190 (85.2)
Age (years)	median (IQR) 35 (31, 39)
History of homelessness	n (%) 73 (32.7)
History of IDU*	n (%) 205 (91.9)

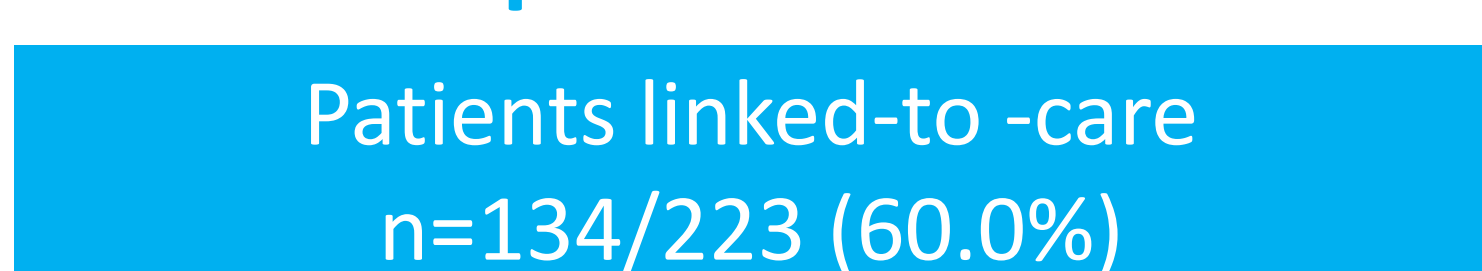
*IDU=injecting drug use

Drug use behavior in HCV-positive IDUs

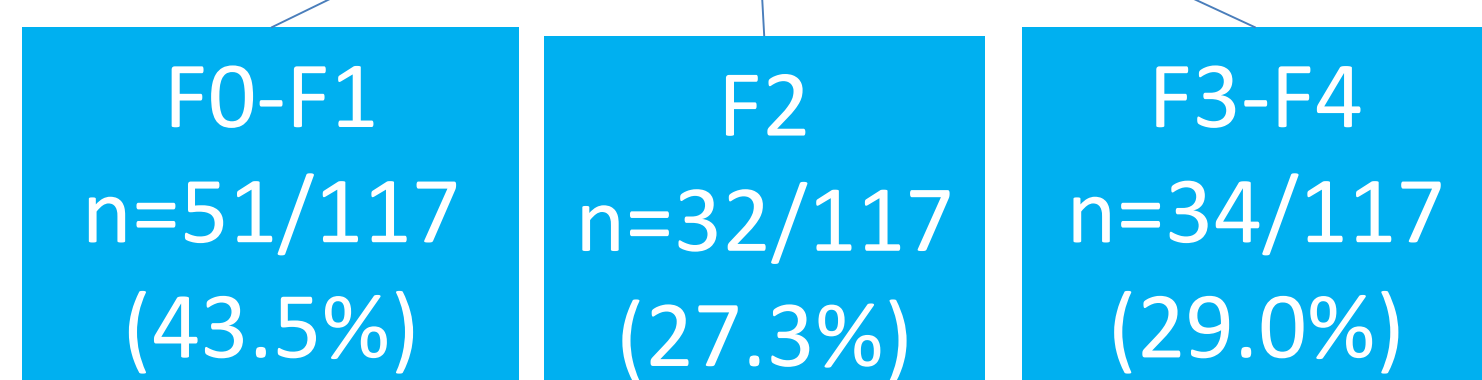
Characteristics	Total n=205
Alcohol use	n (%) 154 (75.1)
History of imprisonment	n (%) 97 (47.3)
Age (years) at drug use onset	median (IQR) 19 (16, 22)
Duration (years) of drug use	median (IQR) 14 (8, 17)
Needle /syringe sharing	n (%) 92 (44.8)
Use of heroin	46 (22.4)
Use of ethnobotanicals	n (%) 36 (17.5)
Heroin & ethnobotanicals	123 (60.0)
Current OST*	n (%) 134 (65.3)

*OST= opioid substitution treatment

HepLink flowchart



Patients with Fibroscan evaluation* n=117/134 (87.3%)



* METAVIR score (kPa)

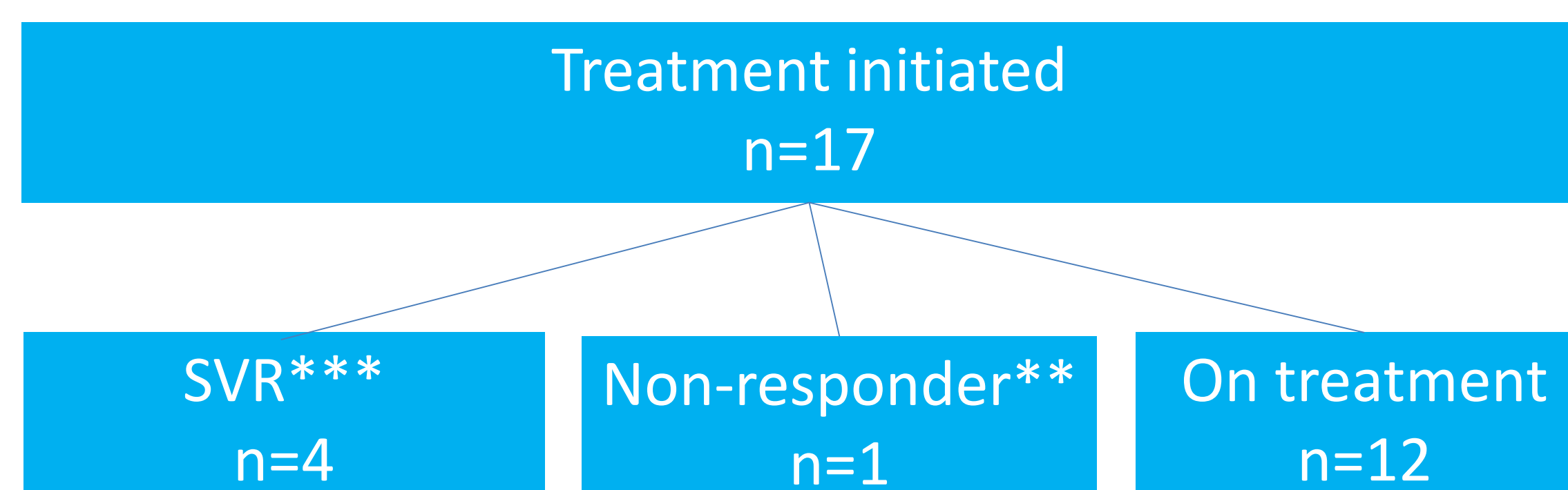
Patients with HCV-RNA performed n=62/134 (46.2%)

Patients with detectable HCV-RNA n=51/62 (82.2%)

Sero-immunological and virological characteristics of HIV/HCV co-infected patients

Characteristics	Total n=134
HIV-infected	n (%) 60 (44.7)
Previous HIV test	n (%) 53 (39.5)
CD4 cell count (/μl)	median (IQR) 493 (322, 658)
HIV-RNA (log ₁₀ copies/mL)	median (IQR) 2.79 (1.27, 4.57)

DAA* treatment



*DAA= direct acting antiviral **IDU with genotype 3 *** SVR= sustained virological response

Lab screen – comparison between HCV mono-infected and HCV/HIV co-infected IDUs

Characteristics	Total n=134	HIV (+) patients n=60	HIV (-) patients n=74	<i>p</i> value
HCV-RNA performed	n (%) 63 (46.6)	45 (75.0)	18 (24.3)	<0.0001
HCV-RNA (log ₁₀ UI/l)	median (IQR) 5.8 (4.9, 6.4)	6.1 (5.4, 6.5)	5.2 (2.8, 5.7)	0.10
HCV-RNA undetectable*	n (%) 12 (8.9)	8/45 (17.7)	4/18 (22.2)	0.71
ALT level (UI/l)	median (IQR) 65 (40, 109)	68 (42, 104)	63 (40, 116)	0.02
Advanced liver fibrosis**	n (%) 38 (28.3)	14 (30.4)	24 (32.4)	0.76
HBs Ag positive	n (%) 11 (8.2)	8 (13.3)	3 (4.0)	<0.0001

* Among HCV-RNA performed **METAVIR score > 9 kPa by Fibroscan

Conclusions

- HCV prevalence was high among patients from key populations, especially in IDUs with HIV co-infection.
- DAA treatment was initiated only in few patients due to the fact that at the beginning of the study there were disease-based restrictions for treatment beside the socio-economic barriers.
- Strengthening the efforts for efficient HCV testing, linkage to care and treatment in Romanian patients with high risk behaviors is mandatory.

References

Swan D, Cullen W, Macias J, Oprea C, et al;(2018) Hepcare Europe - bridging the gap in the treatment of hepatitis C: study protocol, Expert Review of Gastroenterology & Hepatology, 12:3, 303-314
 Oprea C, Ianache I, et al; HIV/Hepatitis C co-infection in key populations from Romania: HepCare Europe - a model of management and service delivery; poster presentation P244; Glasgow HIV Conference 2018