

Improved re-engagement rates for clients with Hepatitis C attending a Substance Misuse Service following an education event to CPNs



Thomson R. ¹, Sinclair A. ¹, Dundas P. ¹, Adams J. ², English S. ¹

¹ Department of Digestive Disorders, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Aberdeen. ² Substance Misuse Service, Grampian Kessock Clinic, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire.

Introduction :

The availability of more effective, all oral treatments for Hepatitis C virus (HCV) introduced in 2015 meant that patients who previously were unsuitable or did not want treatment were now eligible to be treated. NHS Grampian's Hepatology team took this advance in treatment as an opportunity to educate and empower Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPN's) to re-engage clients who were lost to follow-up or had never attended Specialist Services and test those whom had never been tested. The Hepatology team conducted an education day, at a Substance Misuse Service (SMS), on Blood Borne Viruses (BBVs). This particular SMS was chosen as there had been a Liver Nurse Specialist Clinic operating monthly for five years, offering BBV testing, immunisation and assessment or referral for those with active BBV infections. Dry blood spot (DBS) testing was introduced in September 2014, for CPN's to test their own clients.

Aims:

- Identify if clients had ever been tested for BBVs.
- Identify the BBV status of clients tested.
- Identify follow-up status at specialist services of those with active HCV infection.
- Educate and empower CPNs to test those who have never been tested and to re-engage clients who have been lost to follow-up or never attended specialist services.

Methods:

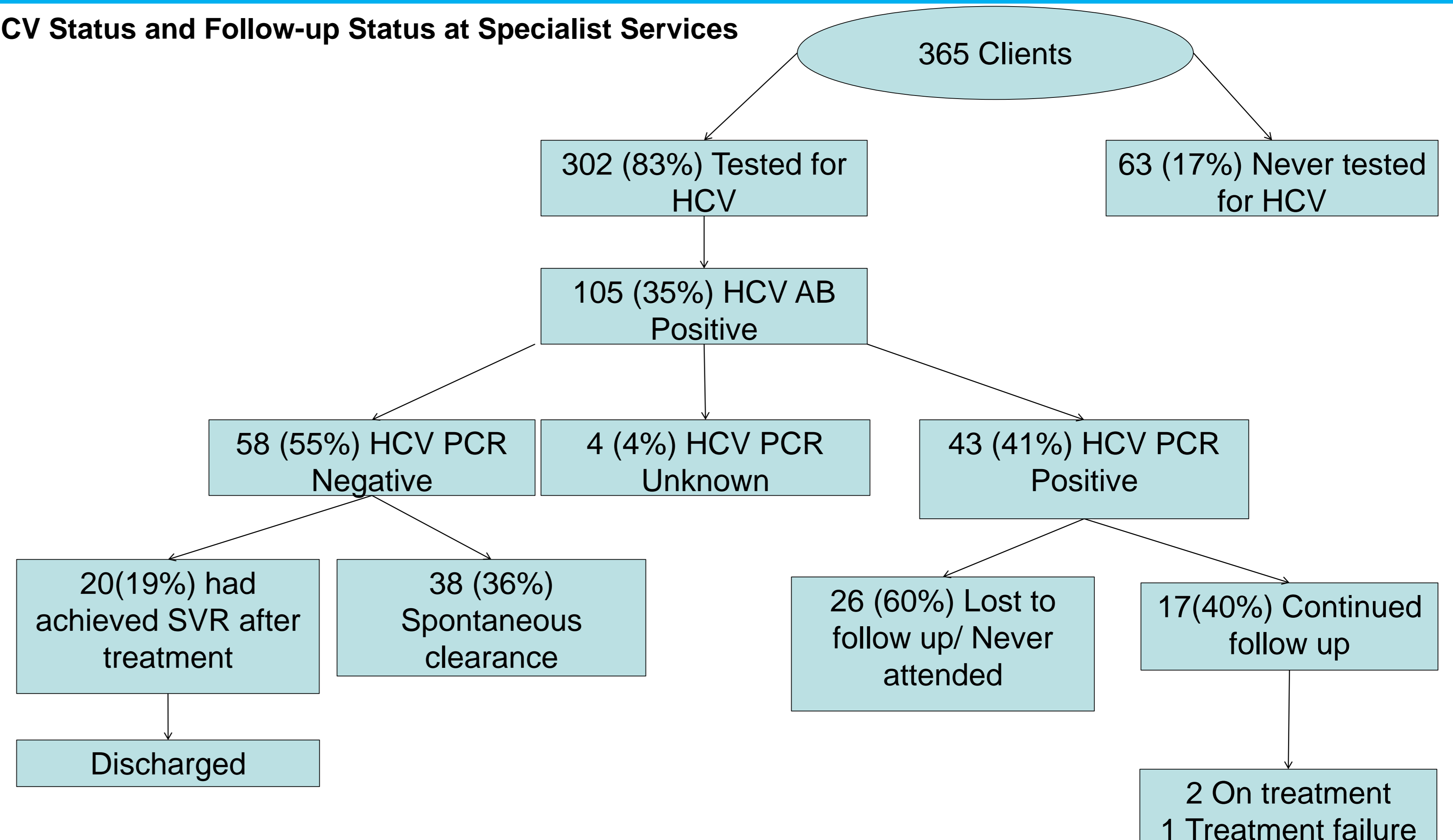
Analysis of a cohort of clients attending the SMS (September 2015). Hospital systems were used to obtain BBV status and follow-up status of those with active infection. The education day for CPNs, highlighted the newer treatment regimens and the benefits of testing and referral. Clients who had been lost to follow-up or never attended specialist services were identified.

Results:

There were 365 clients registered with the SMS during the study period, with an average client age of 37 (22-76 years old) and 222 (61%) were male. In total, 302 (83%) of the 365 clients had been tested for HCV, 105 (35%) were HCV antibody positive. 313 (86%) had been tested for HBV & HIV – no current HBV infection was found, 1 client was co-infected with HIV & HCV. *Figure 1 outlines the client group according to HCV testing status and follow-up status prior to the education session.*

In total, 27/63 (43%) clients who were ever HCV positive have been treated, with a Sustained Viral Response (SVR) rate of 74%. There are 5 patients who did not achieve SVR, 4 of who are lost to follow-up and 2 patients were on treatment during the study period.

Figure 1: HCV Status and Follow-up Status at Specialist Services



Charts 1, 2 and 3 show the follow-up status at specialist services, of the PCR positive clients before and after the education day.

Chart 1: Pre Education Day

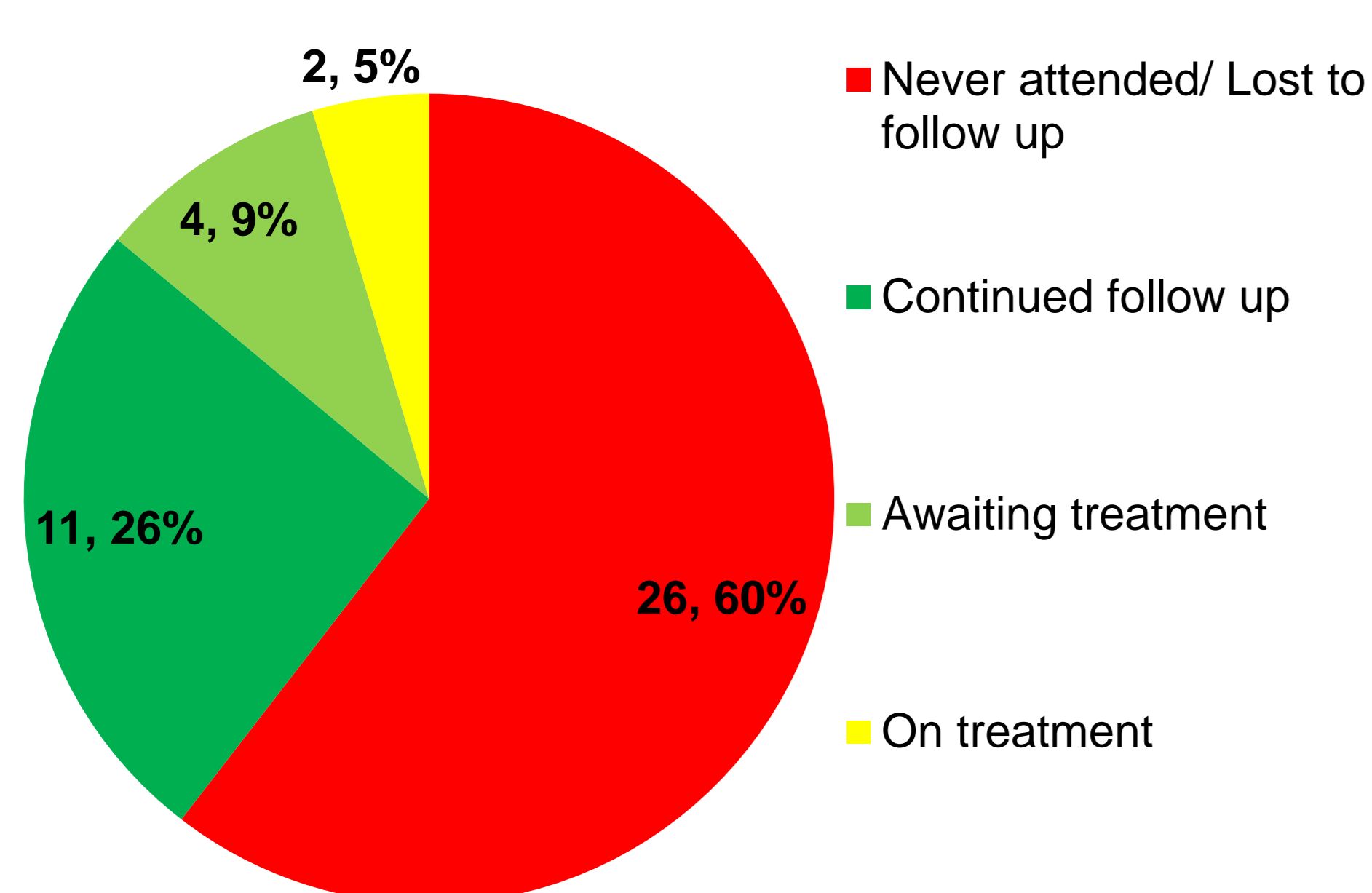


Chart 2: Post Education Day (6 months)

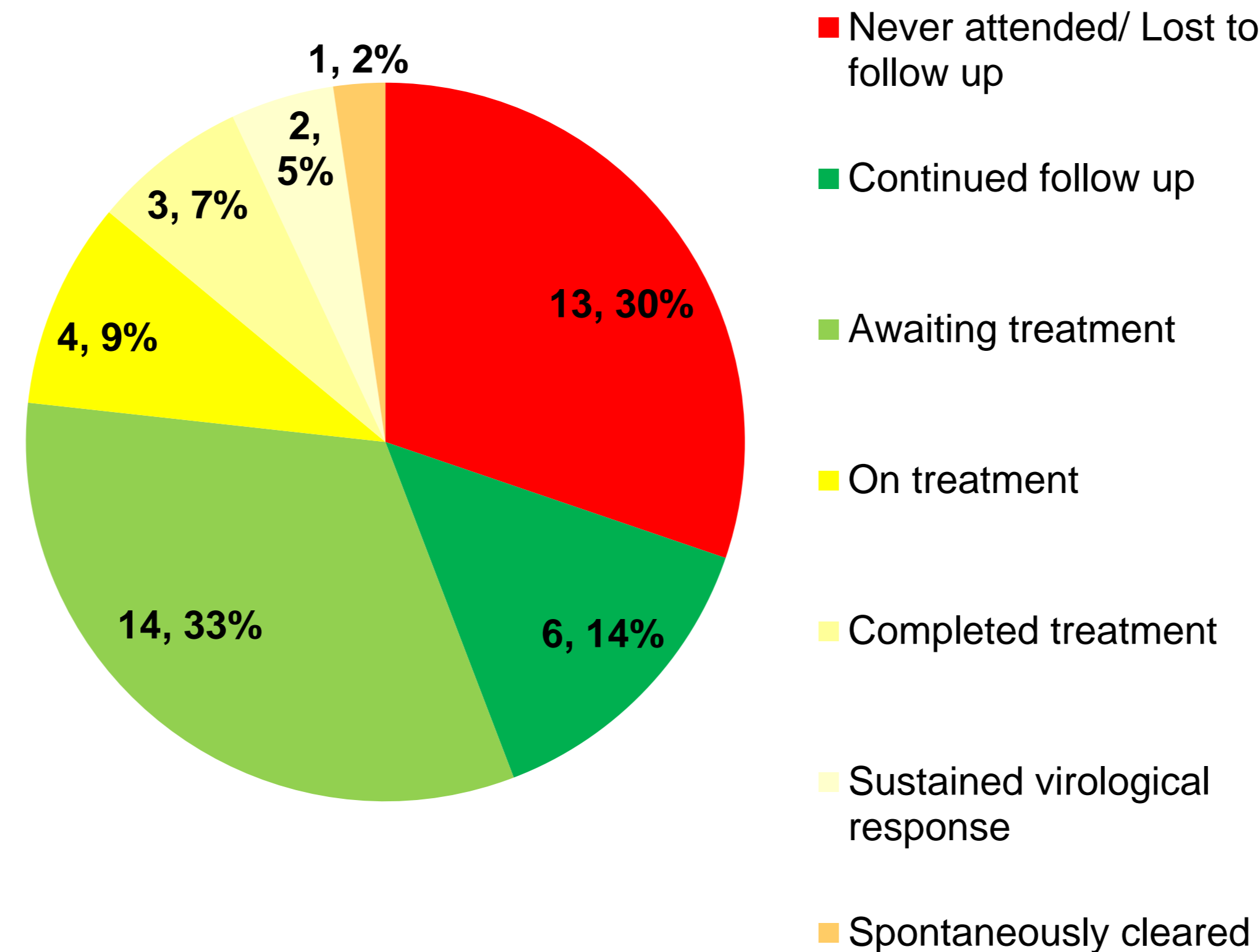
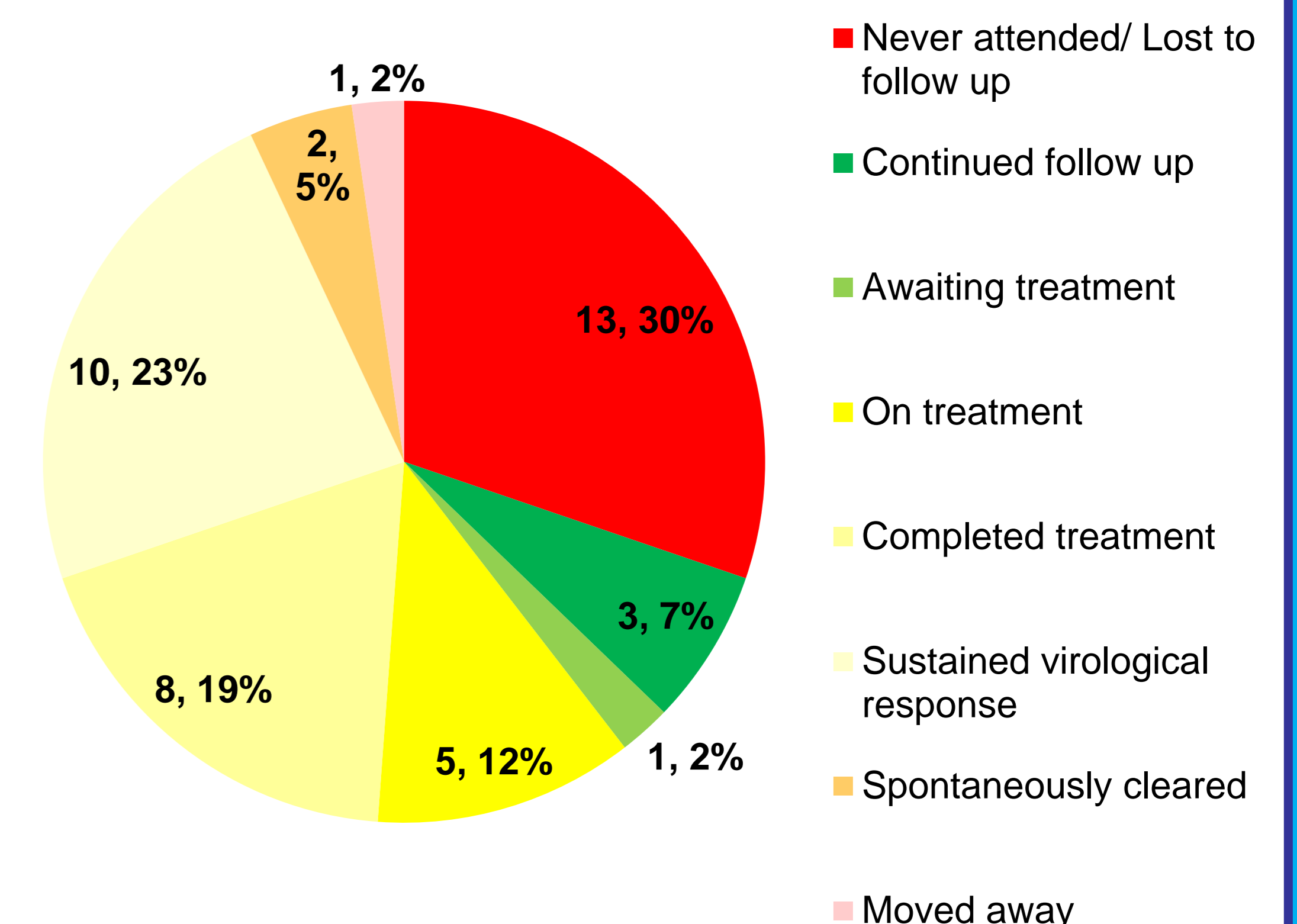


Chart 3: Post Education Day (21 months)



Prior to the education day, 60% of HCV PCR Positive clients had never attended or were lost to follow-up with specialist services compared to 30% after the education day. Currently, 53% of PCR positive clients are either on treatment, have completed treatment or achieved a sustained virological response following treatment.

The education day was attended by 18 multidisciplinary staff. Of those attending, an evaluation report with an 89 % response rate was analysed. All 16 staff members rated the education day as "Excellent" or "Very good". The majority (94%) found the day useful and found it highlighted areas for development. Example comments "learned a great deal...feel more confident advising clients now", "very informative", "enjoyed the training".

Conclusion:

In this cohort of SMS clients, only 63 (17%) had never been tested for HCV, which represents a good success rate for BBV testing. There is a 35% prevalence of Hepatitis C antibody positive clients in those tested, with 63 (60%) of those who were antibody positive ever being HCV PCR positive and eligible for treatment. Since the education day, half of those who were lost to follow-up have now been re-engaged with specialist services. Re-engagement has increased the chances of being treated. To date, we have achieved SVR in 48% of clients ever PCR positive within this SMS study, with another 20% completed treatment and awaiting SVR results. This successful project is in the process of being replicated in other Substance Misuse Services.