

Title: Prevalence Of Hepatitis Among Opioid Drug Users Receiving Medication Assisted Treatment In Southern Highlands Zone (SHL), Tanzania.

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Introduction

- People with opioid use disorders are more at risk of contracting blood-borne infectious diseases such as HIV, hepatitis B, and C.
- In Tanzania, the prevalence of Viral hepatitis C in the general population is estimated to be 2% while among PWID methadone users, reported being 52.1%.
- Increasing hepatitis screening, particularly among vulnerable populations, is key to achieving the World Health Organization’s goal of eliminating viral hepatitis by 2030.
- This study aimed to estimate the prevalence of hepatitis among people with opioid use disorders receiving medication assisted treatment (MAT) in the Southern Highlands region of Tanzania.

Methodology

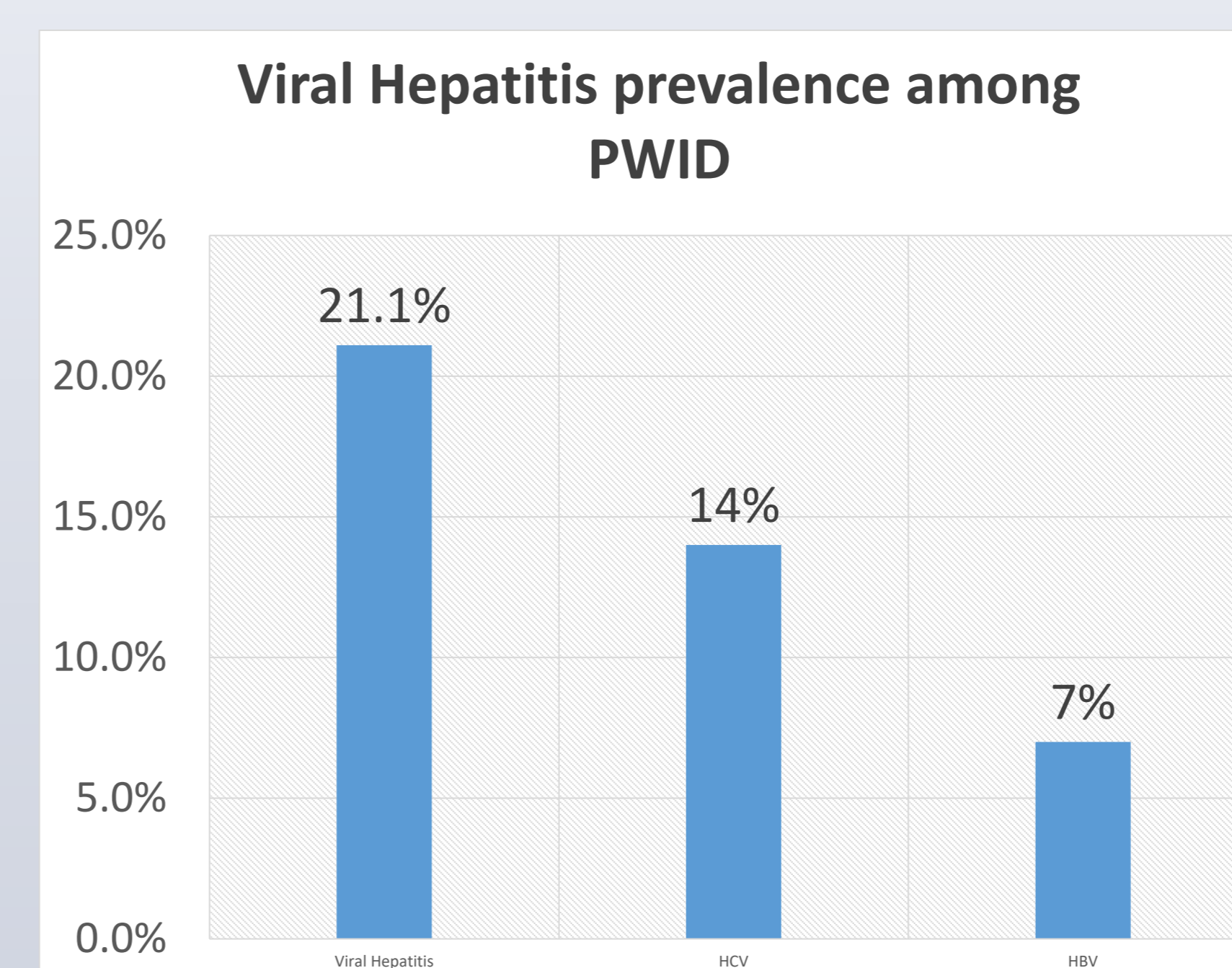
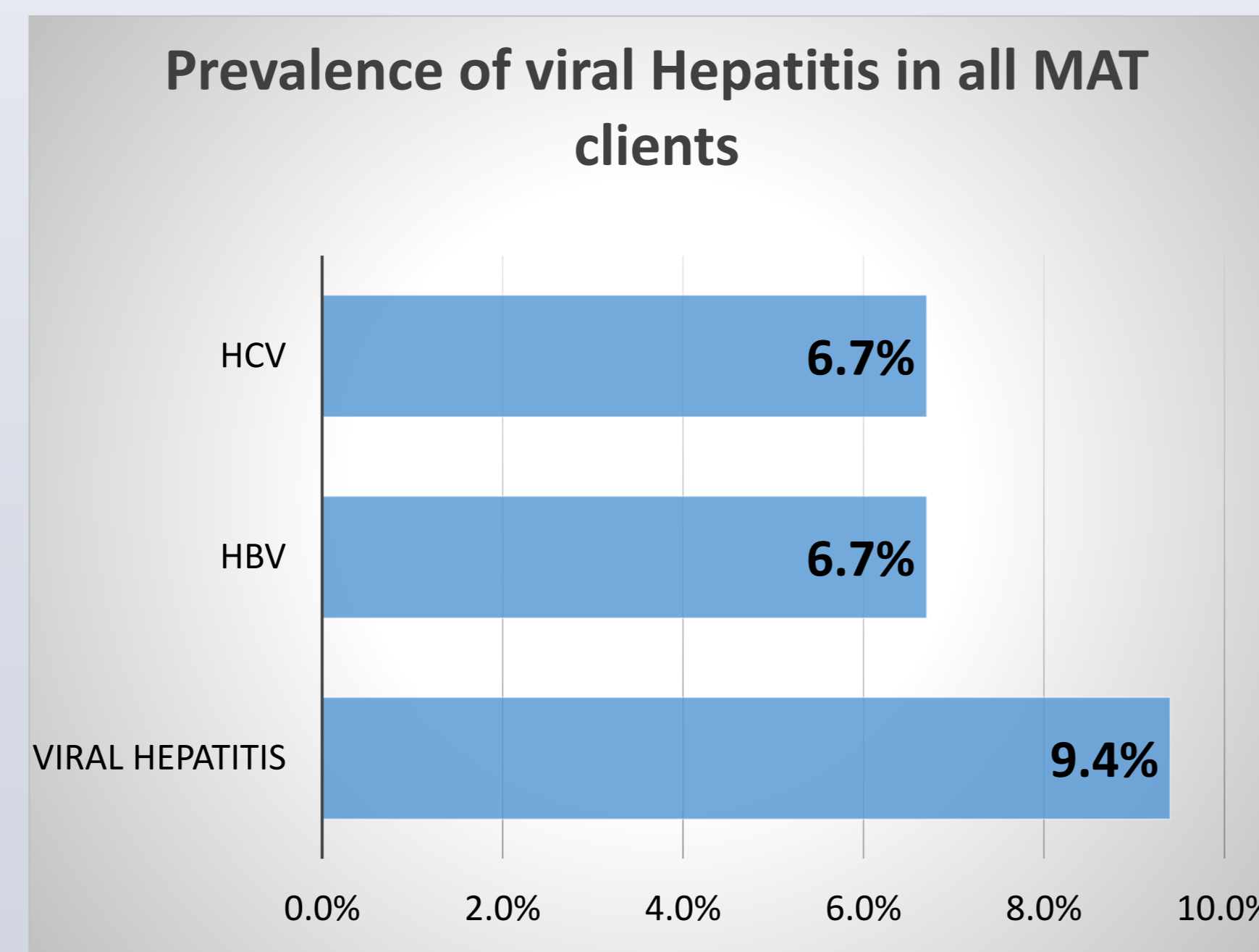
- Data analysis was conducted among opioid drug users attending methadone clinics at Mbeya Zonal Referral Hospital and Tunduma Health Center in SHL, from November 2021 to January 2022.
- All 213 active clients of the two clinics received hepatitis B testing with rapid HBsAg, hepatitis C testing with anti-hepatitis C antibody, and HIV testing following the national HIV testing algorithm.
- We collected demographic detail from all clients and compared positivity rates among demographic groups using Chi-square test.

Results

Demographics information

Column1	Column2	Column3
Sex		n=213
	Male	206
	Female	7
Age		
	<30years	47
	>30 years	166
Drug use route		
	Non Injecting (PWUD)	156
	Injecting (PWID)	57

- Overall seropositivity for viral hepatitis (either hepatitis B surface antigen or anti-hepatitis C antibodies) among PWUD/PWID was 9.4% while of that of hepatitis C mono infections was 6.7 % and hepatitis B mono infection was 6.7%.



- Age >30 years was the only factor associated with any hepatitis virus infection (Chi-square=7.07, p=0.029). HCV infection was strongly associated with injecting drugs (Chi-square=28.57, p <0.001)

Lesson Learnt

- The study found prevalence of Viral hepatitis C among PWID receiving methadone in SHL to be seven times higher (14%) than in the general population but four times lower compared to previous studies of PWID methadone users.
- HCV infection was strongly associated with injecting drugs

Recommendations

- Additional RT-PCR tests and viral load are required to determine active infections and to rule out any hepatitis-related complications.
- More work is needed to remove barriers to viral hepatitis diagnosis and treatment among opioid drug users, If we can diagnose and treat people with Hep C, we can reduce the community risk, and eliminate viral hepatitis.

Reference/Acknowledgement

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