

UNDERSTANDING AVAILABILITY AND BARRIERS TO SCALING-UP PRISON-BASED HEPATITIS C SERVICES AND PERCEIVED ADVOCACY NEEDS GLOBALLY TO INFORM A PRISON-BASED ADVOCACY TOOLKIT: THE INHSU PRISONS ADVOCACY TOOLKIT PROJECT

Authors:

Lok Bahadur Shrestha^{1,2}, Yumi Sheehan¹, Olivia Dawson³, Shelley Walker⁴, Andrew Lloyd¹, Matthew J Akiyama^{5*}, Nadine Kronfli^{6*}; *contributed equally

¹Viral Immunology Systems Program, Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia, ²Kathmandu Research Institute for Biological Sciences, Kathmandu, Nepal, ³International Network on Health and Substance Users INHSU, ⁴National Drug Research Institute, Burnet Institute, ⁵Department of Medicine, Divisions of General Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases, Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx, NY, USA, ⁶Department of Medicine, Division of Infectious Diseases and Chronic Viral Illness Service, McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada

Background:

Few advocacy resources exist to improve hepatitis C (HCV) care in carceral settings. As part of the INHSU Prisons Advocacy Toolkit project, a mapping study was undertaken to: i) evaluate the availability of HCV-related healthcare services in carceral settings across various national socio-economic strata; ii) assess the barriers to scaling up these services; and iii) understand the perceived advocacy needs and tools that would best support advocacy efforts in the sector.

Methods:

A short online survey consisting of closed and opened-ended questions was disseminated to global networks of people engaged in HCV care (n=3763 across INHSU, INHSU Prisons, and partner mailing lists) with two rounds of invitation. The data was extracted into Microsoft Excel and subjected to statistical analysis utilizing R Studio.

Results:

Respondents (n=181) were predominantly female (55%), involved in implementation of prison HCV services (48%), and from high income (62%) countries. HCV services differed significantly across socio-economic status vis-à-vis the reported availability of: HCV antibody testing, HCV RNA testing, fibrosis assessment, and direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) (all p <0.001). Inadequate prison HCV healthcare resources were perceived as the key barrier to scaling-up prison-based HCV services across all country contexts, underpinned by the high cost of DAAs, and limited motivation by policy makers and funders (all p <0.001). Advocacy tools considered to be most useful were best practice case studies and infographics; social media templates were endorsed by respondents from low and lower-middle income countries.

Conclusion:

The availability of HCV testing and treatment services in prisons varies considerably across socio-economic categories. To advance HCV services in carceral settings, advocacy tools that address the principal barriers and that are tailored to various country contexts are needed.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

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