Funding sources for prison-based hepatitis C programs

There are a number of possibilities for funding prison-based hepatitis C programs, and they often require input from more than one source. The potential sources below may provide inspiration for searching for relevant funding agencies in your own context and region.

Sources of funding

Public funding

Government departments

Many governments fund grants for programs and/or research, especially those focused on improving population health (factors that influence the health of population groups or whole populations), so this is likely to be the best place to start your search for funding opportunities. Start by finding out who is responsible for the health of people in prison – for example, this could be either the health or justice/corrections department? Explore whether different levels of government have an interest in the care of people in prison – this may be national, state or regional government bodies.

Beyond the responsible governmental departments, you may also wish to engage with statutory authorities of government that have a more general responsibility for facilitating health or medical research.

Universities or academic institutions

There may be an opportunity to partner with researchers based at universities or research institutes. Researchers often receive funding from both public and private sources to support health research, such as the implementation and evaluation of hepatitis C programs

International bodies

There may be funding opportunities through international donor agencies such as the Global Fund or the Hepatitis Fund, or alternatively through United Nations Agencies who provide technical support.

Private funding

Pharmaceutical companies or product manufacturers

Pharmaceutical companies, such as those with hepatitis C treatments, or product manufacturers, such as those producing diagnostic testing devices (e.g. point-of-care tests) are worth exploring as a source of funding. Your program (or research project) may be mutually beneficial for the company, providing them with opportunities for evaluation or increased sales of their product.

Philanthropic organisations

Some international organisations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, provide philanthropic funding to support the development of healthcare programs.

The World RePORT database is an interactive map that allows you to view global research investments from some of the world's largest biomedical funding organisations. You may like to explore this database to find out who is funding similar projects in your region and beyond.

You may also consider connecting with philanthropic organisations in your region, or those who have a special interest in care for people in prison, or in eliminating hepatitis C infection. This might include groups involved in viral hepatitis awareness or liver health.

Tips for accessing funding

When approaching potential funders, there are a few things to consider:

- Know what you're asking for – how much money or other support you require
- Have a clear proposal that you can describe quickly – think about how you would get someone interested if you met them at an event and had little time to talk about the program
- Have a clear understanding of the details that will be important to this funder. This would include information on implementation, timeframes and the work you have or plan to do to get approval for the program. You may not get to share all this information in your first contact point, but the details will be required at some point
- Think about the funder's goals and show them how your proposal will help them to achieve these goals – there's a distinct difference between the goals of a government department trying to achieve elimination and those of a pharmaceutical company trying to find new markets for its products
- Consider advocating for alternative pricing models such as Payer License Agreements, or a 'Netflix model' to enable treatment access, lower costs and incentivise competition

Additional reading

The Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board has produced a paper on Innovative financing into hepatitis B and C prevention and treatment in LMICs that may provide more relevant information in your search for funding.

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