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HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

April 2022

Public Health Scotland reports latest data on hepatitis C among needle exchange users



Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative

Prevalence of blood-borne viruses and injecting risk behaviours among people who inject drugs attending injecting equipment provision services in Scotland, 2008 to 2020

New [Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative](#) data from [Public Health Scotland](#) suggests the prevalence of chronic hepatitis C has reduced markedly among people who inject drugs, likely associated with the scale-up of hepatitis C treatment since 2015.

The data draws on Scotland-level and NHS board-level surveys, and is funded under the [Scottish Government's Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Framework](#). It finds that uptake of hepatitis C virus and HIV testing has steadily

increased over time, with some of the highest rates reported in 2019–20 (60% and 52% tested within the previous 12 months respectively). The prevalence of chronic and active HCV infection reduced markedly from 37% in 2015–16 to 19% in 2019–20, at the time of the scale-up of HCV treatment among People Who Inject Drugs (PWID) in community settings. More than half (53%) of participants who would have been eligible for therapy (i.e. with evidence of either current or past chronic infection) reported having been treated for their HCV infection.

However, despite the reduction in chronic HCV prevalence, the incidence of infection remained high, at 12 new HCV cases per 100 person in 2019–20. More than half of participants in 2019–20 who were found to have chronic HCV or HIV (based on their anonymous dried blood spot test) reported that they were unaware of their infection.

HCV Action seeks your views for the Spring 2022 member survey



As health professionals with an interest in hepatitis C care, we would be grateful if you could give your views in [HCV Action's 2022 spring survey](#) to inform our understanding of progress towards elimination in different areas of the UK and plans for future HCV Action activity. The survey will help us to understand what is happening on the ground with regards to hepatitis C testing, treatment and follow-up, and offers an opportunity to raise any other issues you think we should be aware of. If you have any questions, please get in touch with hcvaction@hepctrust.org.uk.

The survey will ask you about your view on aspects of hepatitis C care in your area. By your area, we mean the hepatitis C ODN area you work in (if in

England), or Health Board area (if in Scotland or Wales). If you feel you are unable to answer about the situation in the area generally, please answer based on your experience in the service you work in.

The survey will explore hepatitis C care in your area compared with pre-pandemic levels, whether you feel hepatitis C will be eliminated in your area by the NHS England target of 2025, and which elimination initiatives are working well in your area.

New review looks at how to strengthen testing and linkage to treatment



THE LANCET
Gastroenterology & Hepatology

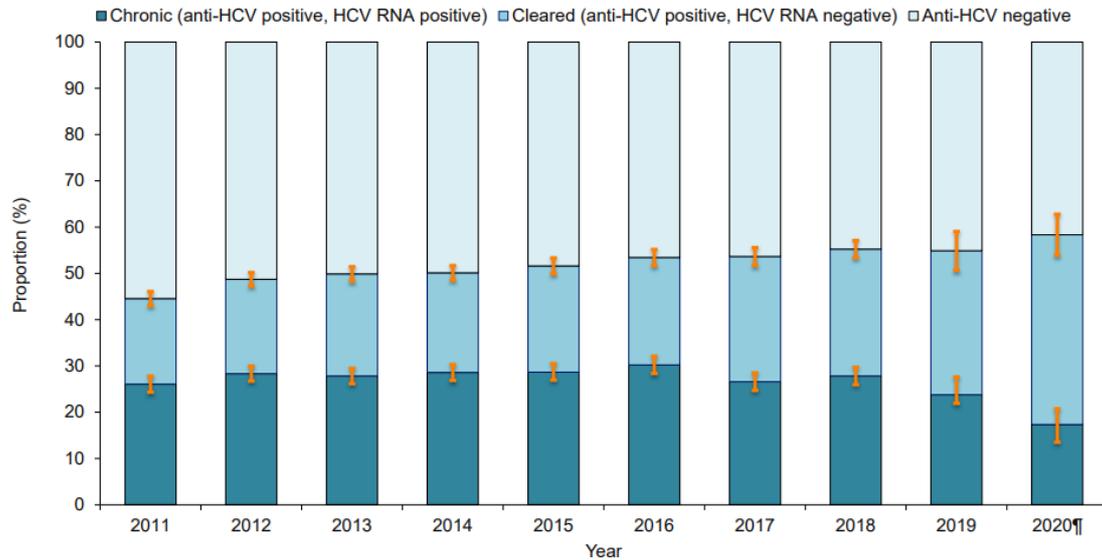
A new systematic review in [The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology](#) has assessed the evidence around interventions to [enhance testing, linkage to care, and treatment initiation for hepatitis C](#).

It suggests that despite the goal set by WHO to eliminate hepatitis C as a public health threat, uptake of HCV testing and treatment remains low worldwide, and reviews existing research on the efficacy of evidence-based interventions to address the barriers to care for people with or at risk of HCV infection. These included HCV antibody testing; HCV RNA testing; linkage to HCV care; and direct-acting antiviral treatment initiation.

Medical chart reminders, provider education, and point-of-care antibody testing were all found to improve outcomes, and interventions that simplified HCV testing (such as dried blood spot testing, point-of-care antibody testing, reflex RNA testing, and opt-out screening) significantly improved testing outcomes. Enhanced patient and provider support through patient education, provider care coordination, and provider education also improved testing outcomes. Finally, integrated care and patient navigation or care coordination significantly improved linkage to care and the uptake of direct-acting antiviral treatment.

Last chance to register for HCV Action's webinar on what data tells us about progress towards hepatitis C elimination

Figure 2. Trend in HCV prevalence* among people injecting psychoactive drugs in England: 2011 to 2020



The next HCV Action webinar will feature presentations on the latest data on hepatitis C and what it tells us about progress towards elimination. Speakers will explore what we can observe about trends from the current data, and what types of further data collection we need to fill gaps in our current knowledge and guide efforts towards elimination.

The webinar will take place from 10.30am-12 midday on **Friday May 6th** - if you haven't already, you can [sign up here](#) to attend.

Dr Monica Desai from the [UK Health Security Agency](#) will provide an overview of the latest data from the UKHSA's recent Hepatitis C in England report. **Professor Graham Foster** from [NHS England](#) will give a perspective on what the data says about NHSE's elimination efforts and where further focus is needed in terms of testing and treatment, particularly as recovery from COVID-19 continues. **Stuart Smith** from [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) will talk about data on the Trust's outreach activity, and **Georgia Threadgold** from NHS England and **Sean Cox** from The Hepatitis C Trust will speak about the situation and present data in prisons. Finally, [Hep_C_U_Later](#) Midlands Elimination Coordinator **Deanne Burch** will talk about what data shows about efforts to tackle hepatitis C in drug services. **Rachel Halford** from The Hepatitis C Trust will chair.

News and reports

* Study data on the [global trends in the spread and treatment of HCV](#) published in *The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology* has [suggested that](#) while the worldwide number of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections has declined between 2015 and 2020, many countries are still far from achieving HCV global

elimination goals.

* Researchers from the University of Bristol have questioned how countries will know [whether the 2030 WHO elimination target has been met](#) and devised different ways of measuring elimination taking into account different country contexts, publishing the results in The Lancet Gastroenterology and Hepatology.

* [Fast Track Cities](#) report that it has been [announced that from April 2022](#), all London emergency departments will automatically test people aged 16 and over for HIV when doing blood tests unless they opt out. London will also be extending this to include testing for hepatitis B and hepatitis C "later on in 2022".

* The Hepatitis C Trust and HCV Action's joint report, *Reframing reinfection: towards sustainable hepatitis C elimination in the UK*, has been [featured in NAM Aids Map](#).

* Last week was Hepatitis C Awareness Week for drug services - providers like [CGL have been participating](#).

* There are [still spaces available](#) for the London Joint Working Group on Substance Use and Hepatitis C ([LJWG](#)) conference on June 17th and they will announce speakers soon.

Share good practice

If you would like your service to be featured as a good practice case study on the HCV Action website, have any news to share with colleagues, or would be interested in being an [HCV Action Ambassador](#), please send an email to hcvaction@hepctrust.org.uk.



*HCV Action is co-funded by AbbVie, Gilead, and MSD.
The Hepatitis C Trust provides secretariat support to HCV Action.*

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