



Expanding integrated HCV/HIV testing to clients in alcohol dependency treatment



RESPUBLIKINIS
PRIKLAUSOMYBĖS LIGŲ
CENTRAS

Partner Organisation(s):
Republican Centre for Addictive Disorders

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OVERVIEW

With the aim to increase integrated HIV and hepatitis C testing a pilot intervention was launched in Lithuania during March-December 2019 to offer screening for HIV and HCV with rapid tests to clients in treatment for alcohol dependency. The pilot intervention took place at the Republican Centre for Addictive Disorders' (RCPL) five regional clinics (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda, Siauliai and Panevezys).

RPLC offers combined HIV and HCV testing to PWID receiving opioid substitution therapy (OST) as part of routine services. In the pilot this was extended to patients treated for alcohol dependency.

APPROACH

- 01** **3 staff training sessions** were held about HIV/HCV testing and linkage to care to inform and motivate staff to conduct the pilot.
- 02** **Rapid screening HIV/HCV test kits** were disseminated to the pilot sites.
- 03** **Rapid screening** for one or both infections offered **to all patients > 18 undergoing treatment** for alcohol dependency at the RPLC centres with unknown HIV and/or HCV status.
- 04** Site coordinators submitted **monthly data report on patients** (age, gender, diagnosis, testing history, test results) and referrals to care for HIV or HCV positive test results.

Country Case Study: Lithuania



Joint Action on integrating prevention, testing and linkage to care strategies across HIV, viral hepatitis, TB and STIs in Europe

HIGHLIGHTS

946 HIV tests and **926 HCV tests** administered compared to 320 and 249 comparatively at baseline.

4343 consultations for alcohol dependency conducted across five centres.



**MOST TESTED PATIENTS
MIDDLE-AGED MEN WITH
NO PRIOR HIV OR HCV
TESTING HISTORY**



**34 HCV CASES
IDENTIFIED**



**3 HIV CASES
IDENTIFIED**



LESSONS LEARNED



High number of positive HCV cases among those with alcohol dependency proved to be highly successful pointing to existing gaps but also opportunities to review current approaches to testing accounting for polysubstance abuse.



New initiative gave an **opportunity to test more patient groups for HIV and HCV** and to save financial resources allocated for laboratory testing.



Lack of sufficient consultation time, absence of proper linkages to care, high costs of rapid HCV test and privacy to conduct testing can pose **barriers to successful implementation and sustainability** of the initiative.



Staff trainings must include not only new procedures and instructions on the voluntary & integrated testing, data reporting and linkages to care, but also address potentially negative attitudes and opposition to new initiatives.



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