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Hepatos
Hrvatsko društvo za bolesti jetre
Croatian Society for the Liver Diseases

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Mobile Outreach for Viral Hepatitis Micro-Elimination in Croatian Prisons: Improving Access to Diagnostics and Linkage to Care (2023–2025)

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Objectives

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection remains a significant public health challenge in prison settings, where prevalence is substantially higher than in the general population. Following the successful outcomes of an initial pilot project, the Croatian Ministry of Justice supported the program as part of a national strategy for viral hepatitis micro-elimination in prisons. The program aims to improve health literacy, expand access to HCV testing, non-invasive liver exams and counseling services, and strengthen specialist linkage to care and access to treatment.

Methods

Between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2025, the Croatian Society for Liver Disease "Hepatos", together with treating physicians from local hospitals and public health specialists, conducted 27 mobile outreach activities in prisons, penitentiaries, and probation offices throughout Croatia. The Mobile InfoHep Center provided education, counseling, HCV testing, FibroScan® liver stiffness measurement (LSM), controlled attenuation parameter (CAP) assessment, and referral to specialist care.

Data were collected on counseling; liver assessments, HCV testing, and linkage-to-care outcomes.



27
mobile outreach activities

Prisons, penitentiaries and probation offices across Croatia

MOBILE OUTREACH SERVICES

- Education & health literacy
- Counseling
- HCV testing
- FibroScan® (LSM & CAP)
- Referral to specialist care

Results

1,235 individuals received counseling and health education

1,163 FibroScan® examinations (94.2%)

247 HCV tested (20.0% of those with at-risk behaviour)



From testing to treatment

Test → Counsel → Treat → Link to care

HCV Testing Results

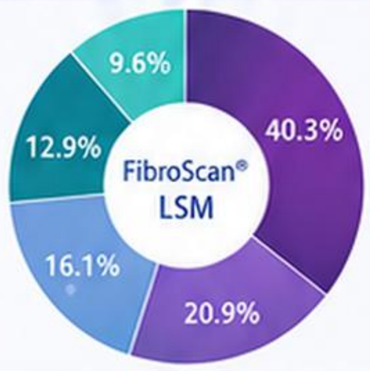


34 (13.8%) newly identified anti-HCV positive

28 (11.3%) aware of HCV diagnosis (not yet treated)

All 62 HCV-positive individuals were successfully linked to care and referred for further specialist exams and treatment.

Liver disease burden among anti-HCV-positive



Normal (<5.6 kPa)	25	(40.3%)
F1	13	(20.9%)
F2	10	(16.1%)
F3	8	(12.9%)
F4	6	(9.6%)

CAP ≥276 dB/m



18 individuals

Conclusions

This prison-based mobile outreach program demonstrates that NGO-led services supported by governmental institutions can improve access to diagnostics, identify previously undiagnosed HCV infections, and strengthen linkage-to-care in vulnerable population. The integration of HCV testing, FibroScan® assessment, counseling, and referral pathways supports viral hepatitis micro-elimination efforts and contributes to achieving WHO 2030 elimination targets in correctional settings.

Partners

Hepatos
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NASTAVNI ZAVOD ZA JAVNO ZDRAVSTVO
SPLITSKO-DALMATINSKE ŽUPANIJE

THE CROATIAN SOCIETY OF GASTROENTEROLOGY

REPUBLIC OF CROATIA
Ministry of Justice, Public Administration and Digital Transformation

THE MOBILE OUTREACH MODEL – DELIVERING IMPACT

Reaches the unreachable → Increases health literacy and awareness → Enables early diagnosis and liver assessment → Strengthens linkage-to-care → Advances HCV micro-elimination in Croatian prisons

