



Hepatitis C elimination in Bulgaria

Presented by

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Bulgaria: Hepatitis C burden of disease

- There is a lack of contemporary data on hepatitis prevalence in the country
- The only available statistical data is on acute hepatitis A, B and C
- In order to collect relevant data and on time, a national hepatitis register is being developed at the moment
- Available data are from blood donors, local screening campaigns and research data compiled by local medical professionals



Bulgaria: Hepatitis C burden of disease



A silent pool of ~109,000 HCV-infected subjects

HCV Infection prevalence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5% in adult general population in Bulgaria • ~2200 treated between 2003-2011 (~55% SVR) • Leading cause of chronic hepatitis (87%), liver cirrhosis 59% & HCC (Hepatocellular carcinoma) <5%
HCV route of transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nosocomial: unsafe medical procedures in the past -older population (50-60 ys) • Patient on hemodialysis (42%) • Transplanted patients (>60%) • IV DUs – cases in subjects up to 35 years old • HIV/HCV co-infection – low HCV prevalence
Genotype distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G1 total of 88% • G1b >77%
Age groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% of HCV cases are among the economically productive population (aged 15-59).

1. The Burden of Hepatitis C in CEE and CIS: An Epidemiological and Economic Assessment, Centre for European Policy Studies, CEPS, BULGARIA; Draft, September 2009; Z. G Ökem, PhD, Seval Akgün, MD, PhD, Prof. of Public Health and Medicine, Baskent University; 2. VHPB (Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board) -Viral hepatitis, October 2011, vol 20 № 1, 3-20; 3. Bulgarian Gastro Society: N. Naumov, 1999, I Ivanova et al., 2005. K. Antonov thesis



Treatment: Hepatitis C



- ~109,000 HCV-infected people
- Traditional Standard of care
 - PegIFN+RBV
 - First generation DAA
- Stable number of treated patients ~400/per year
- Reimbursed: Peg IFN, Boceprevir, Telaprevir
- Registered, not reimbursed AbbVie and Gilead regiment
- The current waiting list includes 241 people, who have no other alternative for treatment, apart from interferon-free therapies





Bulgaria: National hepatitis plan

The Bulgarian National Hepatitis Plan for prophylactics, screening, early diagnostics and treatment of viral hepatitis was drafted in 2013, but is yet to be officially adopted by the Ministry of Healthcare

- The Plan foresees several priority areas:
- 1: Improving the awareness of the general population, developing multidisciplinary partnerships, mobilizing existing resources
- 2: Evidence-based strategies and actions in medical treatment and cost-effectiveness
- 3: Prevention of spreading the disease
- 4: Screenings, diagnostics, treatment and care
- 5: Quality control systems, indicators and control





Bulgaria: Health care system

- **Good practices**

- There is a mandatory vaccination for hepatitis B for new born babies since 1992
- Immunization against hepatitis A remains optional, although there are numerous outbreaks of the disease in the country
- All blood products are tested for the hepatitis virus since 1992

- **Bad practices**

- Treatment of the small group of patients responding to the strict criteria selection
- There are not any reimbursed HCV screenings or early diagnostic programs.





Bulgaria : What does your country expect from the international organisations in the support of control and treatment of viral hepatitis?

- Clear guidelines on screening, prevention and treatment from the international bodies which can be adapted and applied in Bulgaria
- Treatment of hepatitis to become a national policy
- International bodies to adopt HCV eradication as a strategic goal for the next decade
- Active collaboration and communication with Bulgarian health institutions



Bulgaria : Hurdles



- **Access to treatment**

- The answer: managed entrance agreement; Bulgaria and Romania to start joint negotiations with the pharmaceutical industry for access to medicines

- **Lack of screening and coordinated actions towards eradication of the disease**

- The answer: adopting a holistic hepatitis plan, which includes actions towards increasing public awareness, screenings, early diagnosis and other

- **Lack of political will and understanding to curb the spread of the disease**

- multistakeholder approach and building health partnerships to discuss pressing questions and influence reform





Thank you for the attention!

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A viral hepatitis free future : how to make it feasible and affordable

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