Barriers to hepatitis C treatment

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Global Public Health Impact of HCV Control Requires a Radically New Approach

Thomas D, J Int AIDS Soc 2011
HCV Infection -> Diagnosis -> Referral -> Treatment

Level of barrier

System
Provider
Patient

adapted from McGowan, Liv Int, 2011
Societal factors

- disproportionate distribution of HCV burden among vulnerable groups
- risk of HCV infection is highest among blacks and Hispanics, people with lower levels of education, and the poor
- many people with HCV are at disadvantage in terms of health literacy

Armstrong, 2006; Clark 2012
A Global View of Hepatitis C: Physician Knowledge, Opinions, and Perceived Barriers to Care

Christopher E. McGowan, Ali Monis, Bruce R. Bacon, Josep Mallolas, Fernando L. Goncales, Ioannis Goulis, Fred Poordad, Nezam Afdhal, Stefan Zeuzem, Teerha Piratvisuth, Patrick Marcellin, and Michael W. Fried

1st international study to examine barriers to care among HCV providers

- 214-item questionnaire
  - Responses from 697 treating physicians across 29 countries

- Focus
  - Physician/practice characteristics and opinions re HCV care
  - Knowledge
  - Barriers

Survey results: Perceived barriers to HCV treatment fall into 4 categories

Greatest barrier to treatment: Patient factors

Most patients will have >1 treatment-related effect and 10–14% will discontinue as a result.

Physician knowledge & awareness as a barrier to care

Independent of geographic region, medical specialty, or experience level, physicians who scored lower on the knowledge assessment tended to perceive greater barriers to care.

- Physicians with less knowledge may treat fewer patients as a result of incorrectly perceived barriers.
- Perceived barriers may be overcome through improved education.

Survey results: Perceived barriers to HCV treatment fall into 4 categories

**PATIENT**

Patient Related
- Fear of side effects
- Medication expense
- Laboratory expense
- Low success rate of treatment
- Fear of stigma related to HCV
- Preference for alternative therapy
- Desire to wait for newer therapies
- Difficulty with administration
- Treatment duration
- Patient declines liver biopsy
- Inaccessibility of experienced providers

Government Related
- Government restricts treatment
- Insufficient funds allocated to HCV
- Lack of promotion for HCV treatment

**PROVIDER**

Provider Related
- Treatment limited to government-mandated centers
- Lack of office infrastructure to treat patients
- Insufficient reimbursement for physicians
- Unable to obtain necessary labs for treatment
- Limited access to medications or labs
- Insufficient training for HCV management
- Lack of referral to HCV providers by other physicians
- Lack of proper storage for medications

Payer Related
- Insurance plan does not cover treatment
- High out-of-pocket expense for patients
- Restricted insurance coverage for patients with HCV
- Insurance plans will not cover RNA/genotyping
- Excessive paperwork requirements
- Insurance plans limit which physicians treat HCV
- Insurer does not cover serum markers of fibrosis
- Insurance plans do not cover medications for side effects
- Liver biopsy required for treatment

**GOVERNMENT**

COST of MEDICATION

**PAYER**

Barriers to HCV care: underserved populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Testing</th>
<th>Assessment + Therapy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>System</strong></td>
<td>• lack of need adapted care systems for vulnerable populations</td>
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<td>• high cost/ no reimbursement</td>
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<td>• insufficient testing strategies</td>
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Educational programmes are important

Increasing public awareness...

All oral IFN-α-free therapy for HCV would break down many barriers to treatment

Specific major barrier for PWID

The Negative Impact Of The War On Drugs On Public Health: The Hidden Hepatitis C Epidemic

REPORT OF THE GLOBAL COMMISSION ON DRUG POLICY

www.globalcommissionondrugs.org
Conclusions

- Different levels of barriers on different steps of care
- Awareness and education are major barriers
- In consequence low detection and referral rates → building further barriers for treatment
- Low and middle income countries:
  - price of medication as a prime barrier
- IFN-free therapies will break down several barriers
Thank you for your attention

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