Motivation for Treatment of HCV Infection among Drug Users

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BACKGROUND: Hepatitis C infection is prevalent among injecting drug users. Many of them do not start treatment, even if it is accessible and affordable. AIMS: The objective of the study was to find out which are the most frequent reasons for not entering treatment for HCV given by infected drug users. DESIGN AND MEASUREMENTS: The sample consisted of 482 HCV-positive patients with an average age of 32 years (SD ± 6.3), within the range from 18 to 59 years, who were treated at the Centre for the Treatment of Drug Dependencies in Bratislava. There were 323 males (67%). The patients were asked to complete a short questionnaire. RESULTS: 84% of them were aware of their HCV serostatus. On average, they had known about it for 3.5 years (SD = 40), ranging from 1 month to 17 years. 95% of the patients were informed about the HCV treatment options. Out of them, 25% were in treatment for HCV. The reasons for not being in treatment were as follows: 45% did not fulfil the inclusion criteria for HCV treatment, 22% did not have enough interest in or motivation to treatment, 6% were afraid of the liver biopsy required, and 27% reported various other reasons. CONCLUSIONS: There are various reasons why patients with HCV infection do not enter treatment for this condition. The lack of information plays only a small part in this respect. Insufficient motivation seems to be an important factor during the asymptomatic period of HCV infection. Our findings indicate the importance of ethically conducted motivation enhancement counselling while respecting the patient’s autonomy in the decision-making process.

KEY WORDS: HEPATITIS C – TREATMENT – MOTIVATION – INJECTING DRUG USERS

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