

## **Hepatitis C infections in Opioid-dependent Patients (HepCOP1): A representative survey on the state of care in the canton of Zurich**

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**Background:** Evidence and various guidelines (e.g. National Institute of Health, 2002) recommend antiviral treatment for opioid-dependent patients with chronic Hepatitis C (CHC). The objective of our study was to assess how many of the opioid-dependent patients in the canton of Zurich (ZH) were appropriately tested and treated for CHC.

**Methods:** The survey included a representative sample of all patients on opioid maintenance treatment (OMT) in ZH. We developed a questionnaire to collect information from patient's charts (demographic data, laboratory tests, antiviral treatment).

**Results:** 63 physicians or institutions (18% of OMT providers in ZH) participated in this study. They care for 1575 patients, which represents 43 % of all patients on OMT in ZH. 279 randomly selected patient's charts were analyzed. In 197 (70.6%) cases HCV antibodies were tested; among them 113 (57.4%) were positive and 84 (42.6%) were negative. In 82 (29.4%) charts no HCV antibody testing was found and in 67 (24.0%) not even liver enzymes were determined. 88 of the 113 HCV infected patients were positive for HCV-RNA-PCR, none were negative; in 25 cases no PCR-results were found. Genotype 1 or 4 were identified in 29 (33%) cases, genotype 2 or 3 in 12 (13.6%) respectively; in 47 patient charts (53.4%) we did not find any genotype results. 15 patients received a treatment with interferon and ribavirine.

67 (24.0%) patients received less than minimal diagnostics even according to earlier guidelines. Also among HCV antibody positive patients, we found 72 (25.8%) patients who are not informed on chronicity of the infection (25) or about genotype (47).

**Conclusions:** In every second patient on OMT in ZH, the necessary tests were not performed to determine whether antiviral treatment should be offered. Measures to improve adequate testing for HCV are necessary.