



Policy responses to viral hepatitis B and C among people who inject drugs in Member States of the WHO European region:

A sub-analysis of the WHO 2013

The Global Policy Report on the Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis

Alexander Spina, Jeffrey V Lazarus



Background

On 21 May 2010, the World Health Assembly adopted its first resolution (63.18) on viral hepatitis. In doing so, it called on the World Health Organization (WHO) to work with Member States to establish guidelines, strategies, time-bound goals and tools for the surveillance, prevention and control of this group of diseases.

The Global Policy Report on the Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis is the first of its kind, reporting on a global survey of how countries are responding to viral hepatitis in the context of the first WHO global framework to prevent and control viral hepatitis.

Findings both illustrate the disparities that exist across the world and also provide a baseline against which progress at the country, regional and global level can be measured in the coming years.

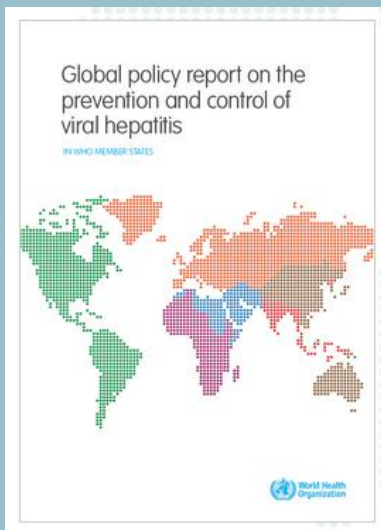
The WHO 2013 hepatitis survey

Aim: This sub-analysis of the global survey focused on questions relating to people who inject drugs (PWID) in the WHO European Region.

Methods: The construction of the questions in the survey was based on the four main areas addressed in the WHO Viral Hepatitis Strategy. It included 43 questions and this sub-analysis includes 11 questions.

The four main areas of the WHO Strategy:

1. Awareness-raising, partnerships and resource mobilization
2. Evidence-based policy and data for action
3. Prevention of transmission
4. Screening, care and treatment.



- For details see WHO:
http://www.who.int/csr/disease/hepatitis/global_report/en/



The Survey

Examples of questions:

1. In your country, is there a written national strategy or plan that focuses exclusively or primarily on the prevention and control of viral hepatitis?*

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ do not know

* Please e-mail us the relevant supporting information including if you have a strategy or plan for other diseases that includes viral hepatitis.

If yes –

Is the strategy or plan exclusive for viral hepatitis or does it also address other diseases (e.g. HIV, sexually transmitted infections)?

- a. ☐ exclusive for viral hepatitis
- b. ☐ only for hepatitis B
- c. ☐ only for hepatitis C
- d. ☐ integrated with other diseases
- e. ☐ do not know

Please indicate whether the following are components of the strategy or plan:

1. Raising awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know
2. Surveillance	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know
3. Vaccination	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know
4. Prevention in general	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know
5. Prevention of transmission of viral hepatitis via injecting drug use	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know
6. Health care transmission prevention	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know
7. Treatment and care	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know
8. <u>Coinfection</u> with HIV	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know

2. Is there a designated governmental unit/department responsible only for coordinating and/or carrying out viral hepatitis-related activities?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ do not know

- a. If yes, how many staff members does it have? _____
- b. Name of unit/department _____

15. Are cases of HIV/hepatitis co-infection registered nationally?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ do not know

Survey in Translation

The survey was translated in four languages:

Борьба с вирусными гепатитами: Всемирная организация здравоохранения/Всемирный альянс по борьбе с гепатитами 2012

Ваше сотрудничество необходимо для сбора данных, которые позволят Всемирной организации здравоохранения и Всемирному альянсу по борьбе с гепатитами оценить эффективность борьбы с вирусными гепатитами на глобальном, региональном и национальном уровнях. Эта информация жизненно необходима для оценки достигнутого прогресса, выявления упущений и определения направления действий в будущем. Пожалуйста, ответьте полностью на все поставленные вопросы. Вы можете отвечать на любом языке. Если вы не знаете ответ на какой-либо вопрос, пожалуйста, постарайтесь получить необходимую информацию. Пожалуйста, пришлите заполненный опросный лист по следующему адресу: obaran@who.int копией hepatitis@cphiv.dk.



Réagir face à l'hépatite virale : enquête 2012 destinée aux gouvernements nationaux élaborée par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé/l'Alliance mondiale contre l'hépatite

Votre coopération est sollicitée dans le cadre du recueil de données qui permettront à l'Organisation mondiale de la santé et à l'Alliance mondiale contre l'hépatite d'évaluer la réaction face à l'hépatite virale aux niveaux mondial, régional et national. Ces informations sont essentielles pour mesurer les progrès et guider les efforts futurs. Veuillez répondre en détail à toutes les questions, en anglais. Vous pouvez fournir des informations complémentaires dans la langue de votre choix. Si vous ne pouvez pas répondre à une question, veuillez faire de votre mieux pour trouver les informations manquantes. Une fois que vous aurez répondu à toutes les questions, veuillez soumettre l'enquête, ainsi que les informations complémentaires, à obaran@who.int en mettant en copie hepatitis@cphiv.dk.

Respuesta a la hepatitis viral: encuesta de la Organización Mundial de la Salud/Alianza Mundial Contra la Hepatitis 2012 para los gobiernos nacionales

Solicitamos su cooperación para recabar datos que permitan a la Organización Mundial de la Salud y a la Alianza Mundial Contra la Hepatitis evaluar la respuesta a la hepatitis viral a nivel mundial, nacional y regional. Esta información es vital para medir los avances y orientar los esfuerzos futuros. Conteste completamente a todas las preguntas en inglés. Puede aportar información adicional en cualquier idioma. Si desconoce la respuesta a alguna pregunta, haga todo lo posible por encontrar la información. Envíe la encuesta completada, junto con cualquier información adicional a: obaran@who.int con copia a hepatitis@cphiv.dk.

Respondendo à hepatite viral: pesquisa da Organização Mundial da Saúde/Alíança mundial contra a hepatite 2012 de governos nacionais

Sua cooperação é solicitada para a coleta de dados que permitirão que a Organização Mundial da Saúde e a Aliança mundial contra a hepatite avaliem a resposta à hepatite viral nos níveis global, regional e nacional. Estas informações são vitais para medir o progresso, identificar insuficiências e orientar esforços futuros. Responda completamente todas as perguntas, em inglês. Você pode fornecer informações de apoio em qualquer idioma. Se não souber como responder uma pergunta, faça o possível para encontrar as informações. Envie a pesquisa preenchida, junto com todas as informações de apoio, para obaran@who.int com uma cópia para hepatitis@cphiv.dk.



Methods

- Descriptive analyses of national activities and bivariate analyses of differences between MS of the European Union (EU) and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) compared to those not in said grouping.

Results: Response Rates

Response rate:

126 countries (out of 194 countries) = 64.9%

Regional response rates:

- **AFRO**: 12 countries (out of 46 countries): **26.1%**
- **AMRO**: 27 countries (out of 35 countries): **77.1%**
- **EMRO**: 17 countries (out of 22 countries): **77.3%**
- **EURO**: 44 countries (out of 53 Countries): **83.0%**
- **SEARO**: 11 countries (out of 11 Countries): **100%**
- **WPRO**: 15 countries (out of 27 countries): **55.6%**

Results

- More than three-quarters of the MS reported offering publicly-funded treatment for HBV or HCV (82% and 80%, respectively), with a significantly higher proportion of **EU/EFTA** Member States ($p=0.004$ and 0.010 , respectively).
- Twenty-five responding Member States (53%) reported having a national policy for prevention of viral hepatitis among PWID; nine (56%) of which were non-EU/EFTA and 16 (57%) **EU/EFTA**.
- Six (38%) non-EU/EFTA and 14 (50%) **EU/EFTA** Member States reported universal testing free of charge, with 2 (13%) and 4 (14%) reporting testing free of charge for PWID.
- 12 responding Member States (27%) reported conducting regular sero-surveys among PWID; six each from EU/EFTA (21%) and **non-EU/EFTA** (38%) subgroupings.

Governments in the WHO European Region reporting activities addressing viral hepatitis by WHO Global Hepatitis Programme strategic axis (N=44)

National Coordination	Have viral hepatitis programme activities targeting PWID as a specific population	32 (73%)	Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom
	Have a written national viral hepatitis prevention and control strategy or plan which includes a component relating to injection drug use	12 (27%)	Armenia, Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Israel, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Turkey, United Kingdom
Axis 3	Have a national policy for prevention of viral hepatitis among PWID	25 (53%)	Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan

Limitations

- Survey questions sought to document the existence of national policies, strategies and programmes without seeking to assess the extent to which they are being implemented.
- The survey also did not yield information on quality or impact of programmes.
- The responses are from governments. Patient groups and other nongovernmental organisations have an important role to play in these investigations; this study could have benefited from input by said parties as well as civil society groups.
- Linguistic and semantic considerations

Conclusions

This sub-analysis highlights gaps in countries and between regions requiring attention, particularly regarding the evidence base and awareness, in order to improve policies and programme activities addressing viral hepatitis among PWID in the European Region.

While further studies are needed, with new (HCV!) treatments available, this study highlights the limited policy attention given to hepatitis in general and PWID specifically.

RESEARCH

Open Access

Policy responses to viral hepatitis B and C among people who inject drugs in Member States of the WHO European region: a sub-analysis of the WHO 2013 global hepatitis policy survey

Alexander Spina¹, Irina Eramova², Jeffrey V Lazarus^{3*}

Abstract

Background: Unsafe injections, through infectious bodily fluids, are a major route of transmission for hepatitis B and C. Viral hepatitis burden among people who inject drugs is particularly high in many Member States of central and Eastern Europe while national capacity and willingness to address it varies greatly.

In 2013, the World Health Organization conducted a survey assessing national viral hepatitis efforts of 194 national governments. Here, we present a sub-analysis of this global survey focusing on questions relating to people who inject drugs in the WHO European Region.

Methods: The initial survey included 43 questions covering awareness, data, prevention, and screening and