

HIPS/18/49- Optimising Hepatitis C Treatment for People Who Inject Drugs: Developing a GP-led Patient Pathway

The hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a serious infection that attacks the liver, and is a leading cause of mortality and morbidity worldwide. In Scotland, approximately 37,000 people are infected, with over 85% of these infections in people who inject, or have injected drugs (PWID). Treatment for HCV is simple, tolerable and effective. However, treatment uptake is estimated at only 5-6%. This means that tens of thousands of people are suffering unnecessarily. The reasons for such low uptake relate to multiple interruptions in the journey through care, not least the difficulty of linking those diagnosed with HCV into treatment. One strategy to improve this is the movement of HCV treatment away from traditional specialist centres, and into primary care. This has been achieved successfully elsewhere in the world in other health care systems. In the proposed research we will work with GPs, service users and others to 1) identify the key constituents of GP-led HCV treatment, and 2) develop an acceptable and practicable GP-led treatment pathway for PWID in Scotland. Without a significant increase in treatment uptake among PWID, the burden of HCV is unlikely to reduce substantially in the coming years.