CO-SCREENING FOR ANTI-SARS-COV-2 AND ANTI-HCV IN CASOLA DI NAPOLI, ITALY

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PRE-PANDEMIC PHASE: THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

The HCV elimination project in Casola di Napoli aimed to screen and treat all residents of the municipality for HCV. The project was run by EpaC Onlus, a non-profit association dedicated to the treatment, prevention and education of liver diseases.

THE SOLUTION

Opportunity to utilise the public health momentum and combine screening for COVID-19 antibody and HCV antibody realised

Project modified with protocol for COVID-19 antibody and HCV antibody co-screening

Scientific societies, local government ministers and sponsors were quickly engaged

Position paper developed by scientific societies in collaboration with EpaC Onlus released in June 2020

PANDEMIC PHASE: THE PROBLEM

Italy was hit early and hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, almost all infectious diseases and gastroenterology staff were redeployed to COVID-19 departments, resulting in the suspension of all HCV elimination activities. Encouragingly, a survey indicated that 92% of Italians would take an antibody test for COVID-19.

POST-PANDEMIC: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

A single rapid test for both COVID-19 antibody and HCV antibody could increase uptake of HCV testing and address the stigma associated with viral hepatitis.

Continued efforts are needed to lobby the Ministry of Health and Government to embed combined screening at a population level, as a two-pronged approach for both understanding COVID-19 epidemiology and facilitating HCV elimination.

Integrated testing strategies could be expanded to include other blood-borne viruses such as HBV and HIV, deployed via rapid tests.

2671 residents co-screened for both COVID-19 antibody and HCV antibody (as of 12 July 2020)

3500 residents planned to be screened


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