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A new virus in the mix: learning from the pandemic to re-shape viral hepatitis care

Marc Bourlière (France)
Ivan Gardini (Italy)
Disclosures

Marc Bourlière

- Advisory board member and speaker: AbbVie, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Gilead Sciences, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, Merck Sharp & Dohme, Intercept, Roche

Ivan Gardini

- EpaC Onlus has received grants from Gilead Sciences, AbbVie, AlfaSigma, Intercept and Merck Sharp & Dohme
A new virus in the mix: learning from the pandemic to re-shape viral hepatitis care

Marc Bourlière (France)
COVID-19 has presented the liver disease community with many challenges... But there is a lot to be positive about.

Clinical practice can evolve quickly if it needs to...

The liver disease community has mobilised

- 133* Publications
- Registries
- 2¹
- International guidelines
- 7²

There is still good news³

NHS Tayside claims it has 'effectively eliminated' hepatitis C. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-5358315 (accessed 28 July 2020)

¹ Using PubMed search terms "COVID-19"[Text Word] AND "liver disease"[Text Word], as of 19 August 2020

3. BBC News: NHS Tayside claims it has 'effectively eliminated' hepatitis C. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-5358315 (accessed August 2020)

1. COVID-HEP registry. Available at: https://www.covid-hep.net/updates.html (accessed August 2020)
Telemedicine is not a new concept


AASLD: American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases; EASL: European Association for the Study of the Liver; ECHO: Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes; SEFH: Sociedad Española de Farmacia Hospitalaria (Spanish Society of Hospital Pharmacy)
Telemedicine can be simple… or more sophisticated

- **Televisits**: Usual patient–provider visit, but via tele- or videoconference
- **Telemonitoring**: Signs or symptoms sent electronically from patient to provider
- **Telesupervision**: Mid-level provider presents to an attending physician
- **Teleconsultation**: Patient cases discussed between experts in different locations
- **Tele-interpretation**: Remote interpretation of tests

Phone
Telemedicine can be simple… or more sophisticated

Key considerations
- Cannot be used to replace care in all settings and situations
- Potential issues with access and data security
- Potential challenges with funding

Televisits
Usual patient–provider visit, but via tele- or videoconference

Telemonitoring
Signs or symptoms sent electronically from patient to provider

Telesupervision
Mid-level provider presents to an attending physician

Teleconsultation
Patient cases discussed between experts in different locations

Tele-interpretation
Remote interpretation of tests

Uptake of telehealth at Saint Joseph Hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic

Uptake of tele-consultation and video consultation from January–June 2020

Therapy areas utilising telehealth

- Hepatology and GI
- Dermatology
- Lung diseases
- Rheumatology
- Gynaecology/Obstetricians
- Cardiology
- Ophthalmology
- Thoracic surgery
- Abdominal surgery
- Orthopaedic surgery
- Urologic surgery
- Paediatrics
- Endocrinology
- Anaesthesiology
- Oncology
- GP
- IVF
- Vascular surgery
- ENT surgery
- Paediatric surgery

Unpublished data courtesy of Marc Bourlière

GI: gastrointestinal; GP: general practitioner
But… integration, decentralisation, task-sharing and outreach models of care are still important to achieve elimination

The viral hepatitis elimination call to action

Endorsed by

Call to Action for Liver Associations to Advance Progress Towards Viral Hepatitis Elimination: A Focus on Simplified Approaches to HCV Testing and Cure. Available at: https://www.aasld.org/programs-initiatives/viral-hepatitis-elimination-call-action (accessed August 2020)

ALEH: Associacion Latinoamericana para el Estudio del Higado (Latin American Association for the Study of the Liver)
The potential impact of COVID-19 on the HCV care cascade


This is a conceptual HCV care cascade. Care cascades vary according to region, setting and population. SVR: sustained virological response
Take care of people where they are

Hepatologist + Nurse or Phlebotomist

Social worker

Rapid HCV Ab test
Genotyping
FibroScan
DDI assessment

Local lab
HCV RNA
HIV
HBV

HCV Ab+

Screening and assessment of 250 homeless people in 2020

Ab: antibody; DDI: drug–drug interaction
Van by Jens Tåming from the Noun Project
Homeless by Ed Harrison from the Noun Project
Take care of people where they are

Hepatologist + Nurse or Phlebotomist

Local lab
HCV RNA
HIV
HBV

Social worker

Rapid HCV Ab test
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DDI assessment

Provides phone, results and follow-up

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Take care of people where they are

**Hepatologist + Nurse or Phlebotomist**
- Rapid HCV Ab test
- Genotyping
- FibroScan
- DDI assessment

**Social worker**
- Provides phone, results, and follow-up

**Local lab**
- HCV RNA
- HIV
- HBV

**Screening and assessment of 250 homeless people in 2020**

Social worker follows up patients, monitors medication uptake and SVR12

Prescribes treatment

Ab: antibody; DDI: drug–drug interaction

Bourlière M, personal communication
We have many patients to find to achieve viral hepatitis elimination: The French situation in January 2020

Please see SOS Hepatitis Federation and Melin P, et al. AASLD 2018; Abstract 1571 for more information
http://www.soshepatites.org/
We have many patients to find to achieve viral hepatitis elimination

COVID-19 situation in France according to DGS and Le Monde on 17 August 2020

Data provided by Bourlière M;
There are huge global efforts to encourage COVID-19 screening... Is this a unique opportunity for viral hepatitis?

COVID-19 antibody testing

Bourlière M, personal opinion
There are huge global efforts to encourage COVID-19 screening... Is this a unique opportunity for viral hepatitis?

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COVID-19 antibody testing

Combined COVID-19/HCV/HBV antibody testing

An opportunity to find more patients in the general population....
There are huge global efforts to encourage COVID-19 screening... Is this a unique opportunity for viral hepatitis?

COVID-19 antibody testing

- COVID-19

Combined COVID-19/HCV/HBV antibody testing

- COVID-19
- HCV
- HBV

An opportunity to find more patients in the general population....

‘Not enough of a problem’
Costs
Stigma associated with HCV and injection-drug use
Concerns with capacity to manage new diagnoses

Bourlière M, personal opinion
There are huge global efforts to encourage COVID-19 screening... Is this a unique opportunity for viral hepatitis?

There are huge global efforts to encourage COVID-19 screening... Is this a unique opportunity for viral hepatitis?

COVID-19 antibody testing

Combined COVID-19/HCV/HBV antibody testing

Change the narrative and increase awareness of HBV and HCV

>99% SVR¹

↓ in long-term morbidity and mortality²


PAG: patient advocacy group
Re-shaping viral hepatitis care

Ivan Gardini
President of EpaC Onlus, Italy
Re-shaping viral hepatitis care in Italy: Combined COVID-19/HCV antibody testing

- Planned HCV screening of 3500 residents
- All HCV elimination activities suspended during pandemic
- Position paper developed by Scientific Societies in collaboration with EpaC Onlus released in June 2020

- Continued efforts needed to lobby Ministry of Health and Government to embed co-screening at a population level
- Residents co-screened for COVID-19 and HCV1*

Gardini I, personal perspective

*As of June 2020
Re-shaping viral hepatitis care in Italy: Combined COVID-19/HCV antibody testing

Planned HCV screening of 3500 residents
All HCV elimination activities suspended during pandemic
Screening for COVID-19 and HCV combined

Position paper developed by Scientific Societies in collaboration with EpaC Onlus released in June 2020

Residents co-screened for COVID-19 and HCV

Continued efforts needed to lobby Ministry of Health and Government to embed co-screening at a population level

As of June 2020

EpaC Onlus. Available at: https://www.epatitec.info/stopcovid-zeroepatitec (accessed August 2020)

In Casola di Napoli rapid tests for Covid and hepatitis C to all inhabitants

In Casola di Napoli, a small town in the Lattari Mountains, in the province of Naples, the screening of the entire population "Stop Covid - Zero hepatitis C" starts today, Thursday 25 June: all citizens, more or less 3,900 people, will be subjected to rapid tests for Covid and tests for Hepatitis C
Re-shaping viral hepatitis care for patients

Screening in pharmacies

In Italy, it is becoming increasingly common for people to be screened at pharmacies using self-tests (with the help of trained personnel).

Increase awareness to patients that pharmacies can be a safe and reliable place to receive the test, get advice/information and start the therapeutic pathway.

Producers of rapid tests (salivary and non-salivary) should obtain authorisation to market self-tests in pharmacies across Europe.

Involving non-liver disease specialists in the delivery of care

If adequate training was provided, the prescription of DAAs could potentially be performed (under specialist supervision) by:

- Family doctors/GPs
- Prison healthcare personnel
- Staff working in addiction centres

Not all scientific societies are supportive of this approach however it is an important topic for discussion.

Sharing of best practices/learnings from pilot projects where other HCPs have got involved in HCV treatment delivery should be encouraged.

Utilising telemedicine

A key tool that can help in all aspect of HCV care including:

- The start of the therapeutic pathway
- Linkage to care
- Patient follow-up

In Italy, one of the main challenges with telemedicine is that there is no universal regulatory framework.

Further guidance (at a European level) on telehealth and how to use this tool effectively is required.

Gardini I, personal perspective

DAA: direct-acting antiviral; HCP: healthcare professional
Re-shaping viral hepatitis care in the COVID-19 era...
Stay focused, stay motivated

1. Leverage opportunities from the COVID-19 public health response

2. Expand testing to find new cases of HCV and HBV

3. Establish programs that support the general population with viral hepatitis

4. Establish programs that include social, cultural and harm reduction support

5. Simplify the cascade of care