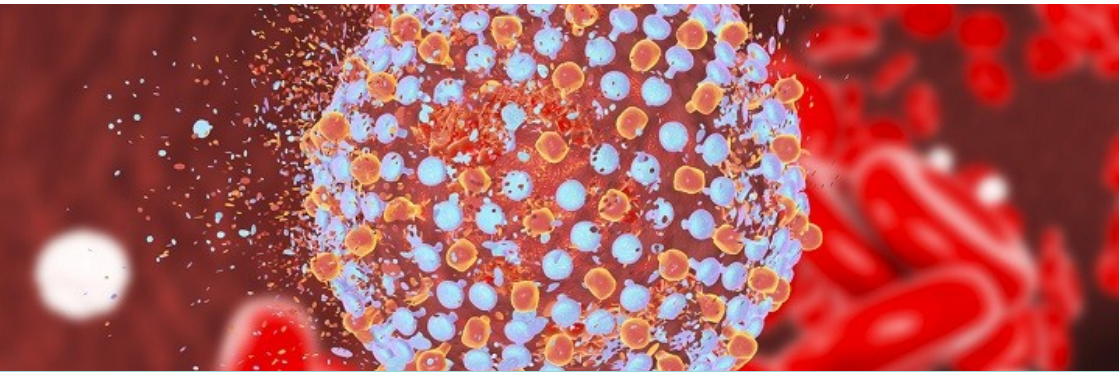




Towards global elimination of Hepatitis C: Bristol research informs prevention and treatment strategies



“We captured the crest of a new wave of research on achieving HCV elimination, and through doing so were able to produce some important and timely insights that have helped guide national and global health policy” Prof Peter Vickerman

Research Context

Globally, there are an estimated 71 million individuals infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). In more affluent countries infections are mostly amongst people who inject drugs (PWID) or result from infections within this group, in low and middle-income countries infections are more common in other population groups as well as PWID.

The availability of highly effective antiviral HCV therapies has resulted in HCV being an easily curable infection, allowing the World Health Organization (WHO) to set global targets for eliminating HCV by 2030.

A team of University of Bristol researchers, affiliated to the HPRU BSE and led by Profs Peter Vickerman and Matt Hickman have made a substantial contribution to the evidence base informing HCV prevention and treatment practices and policies in the UK and beyond. This includes evidence that needle and syringe programmes, opioid substitution therapy and low dead space injecting equipment are all effective and cost-effective means of reducing HCV transmission amongst PWID. The team have also developed mathematical models to show the dramatic impact that varied HCV case-finding and treatment scale up strategies can have for achieving HCV elimination within the UK and across the world.

Route to Impact

Our team are considered world leaders in HCV research and have worked with the WHO and policy-makers in countries around the world to provide evidence to support policy development. For example, research findings were directly used to develop the WHO global targets for achieving HCV elimination, and the team has worked directly with Ministers' for Health in Georgia and Pakistan.

The research has been promoted via social media, news stories on the HPRU BSE website and blog posts. Findings have also been shared with the NHS England HCV Elimination Initiative, UK National Strategic Group for Viral Hepatitis, and at events organised by HCV Action, an organisation bringing together health professional and commissioners with interest in improving the quality of care for HCV.

The team work in a wide range of collaborative partnerships including with UKHSA, the HPRU in Sexually transmitted and Blood Borne Infections at UCL and with researchers in many countries, including

Kenya, Scotland, Australia, Ukraine and Vietnam.

Impact Outcomes

Research on the impact and cost-effectiveness of HCV prevention and treatment has;

- underpinned the WHO's Global Health Strategy (2016) to eliminate HCV by 2030, initiating a global expansion in HCV treatment;
- guided the WHO's treatment guidelines (2018) that expanded HCV treatment to all patient groups
- underpinned the WHO's framework (2021) for validating whether a country has achieved HCV elimination;
- informed HCV elimination initiatives in more than 12 countries including the UK,

Evidence is now beginning to emerge that implementation of HCV elimination initiatives are bringing positive change, for example in Scotland treatment scale up has resulted in a 71% reduction in HCV infection amongst PWID and in Australia a 42% reduction has been seen.

Making a Difference: Lessons for Success

Ensuring we had close collaborative links with stakeholders in the countries we were working, and internationally, enabled us to consider questions that were important to them, and meant that there was an interested audience to share our findings with..

Read the papers

[Martin et al](#), Hepatology 2013

[Martin et al](#), Journal of Hepatology. 2016

[Trickey et al](#), Journal of Viral Hepatitis. 2019

[Platt et al](#), Cochrane Database Systematic Review. 2017

[Lim et al](#), Lancet Global Health. 2020

Find out more

To find out more about this research and the work of the HPRU in Behavioural Science and Evaluation please contact:

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