Prescribing trends of direct acting antivirals (DAAs) for the treatment of hepatitis C in Ontario, Canada

**Background**

- Chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection affects over 250,000 Canadians and accounts for more years of life lost than any other infectious disease in the country.
- In 2012, direct acting antivirals (DAAs) were approved for the treatment of HCV in Canada and with cure rates greater than 95%, the growing use of these agents has been associated with declining HCV-related hospital admissions.
- Given the changing reimbursement mechanisms and treatment guidelines, it is important to understand the characteristics of individuals prescribed DAAs and the specialty of prescribing physicians.

**What did we investigate?**

Characteristics of individuals who were prescribed DAAs and prescribing physicians’ specialities in Ontario between 2012 and 2018.

**How was the study conducted?**

- We conducted a repeated cross-sectional study examining prescription DAA claims reimbursed by the public drug program in Ontario between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2018.
- Results were reported overall and by prescriber speciality for each quarter during the study period.
- A secondary analysis described the characteristics of individuals who received a publicly-funded DAA prescription in 2018, including demographic information, long-term care home status, major comorbidities, and past opioid exposure.

**Key points**

- The rate of DAAs reimbursed by the Ontario Public Drug Programs experienced rapid and sustained growth that strongly correlated to changes in reimbursement, novel treatments, and treatment criteria over the 6-year study period.
- The majority of DAA recipients received their prescriptions from specialty prescribers.

**What did we find?**

- Between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2018, there were 27,116 individuals who received a publicly-funded DAA prescription.

**Recommendations**

**Policymakers**

- Policymakers should consider strategies to expand access to community-based models of care, which may be better equipped to provide the comprehensive and flexible support required by some HCV patients, compared to specialist care providers.

**Healthcare professionals**

- Healthcare professionals are encouraged to seek educational training to increase their capacity to better address the needs of complex clients and ensure successful treatment outcomes.

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For more information

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This project was completed in collaboration with South Riverdale Community Health Centre.

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