**NEW ANTIVIRAL DRUGS FOR HEPATITIS C IN ITALY: WILL IT BE A TREASURE HUNT?**

**BACKGROUND**

Despite hepatitis C virus (HCV) being a global health threat, access to the various treatments is highly variable across regions. The International Antiviral Society-Organization for the Study of Viral Hepatitis (IAS-OSVH) guidelines recommend that treatment should be available to all eligible patients, regardless of the severity of the disease. However, the availability of interferon-free direct-acting antiviral agents (DAAs) can vary significantly among countries, with some countries providing comprehensive access while others have limited availability.

**METHODS**

The study aims to examine patient perspectives on the access to novel DAAs, with a focus on geographical provenience, reimbursement possibilities, and the potential for raising funds to support the treatment of all eligible patients. The study involved a survey conducted by the Italian Liver Patient Association (EpaC) on a sample of patients with hepatitis C.

**RESULTS**

- **Geographical Provenience:** All Italian regions were represented, with a majority from the North and a smaller percentage from the South.
- **Participants Profile:** 727 valid forms out of 3,500 €, the availability of interferon-free monotherapy DAAs drugs in the near future, different reimbursement possibilities (payment by risk, based on severity of the disease).
- **Patients’ Opinions:**
  - 77% have HCV genotype 1 infection, 6% do not know, the remaining are infected by genotype 2, 3 or 4 (a small percentage of patients are aware of their genotype).
  - 35% of patients would go everywhere to get the treatment they need, despite the severity of the disease.
  - A subanalysis of the answer “I want to cured soon” reveals a high percentage (>78%) of patients who wish to receive treatment as soon as possible, regardless of their disease stage.

**DISCUSSION**

- Discussion on the ethical implications of rationing treatments, including the potential for raising funds to support the treatment of all eligible patients, especially those with advanced disease.
- Importance of patient perspectives in shaping policy decisions and ensuring equitable access to treatments.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- The study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to ensure equitable access to novel DAAs, considering both patient perspectives and the financial implications.
- The role of patient organizations in advocating for equitable access to treatments.

**Question 1:** Do you want to be treated now, regardless of the severity of your disease? (Fig. 5)

**Question 2:** How far are you willing to travel to receive the treatment you need? (Fig. 6)

**Question 3:** Should EpaC publicly support the funding of treatments for all eligible patients, despite the severity of the disease? (Fig. 7)

**Question 4:** What is the longest distance you are disposed to go in order to get the right treatment? (Fig. 8)

**Question 5:** What should be the standard of care for patients with advanced disease? (Fig. 9)

**Question 6:** What do you think is the best solution for the lack of equity of access with all Institution independently? (Fig. 10)

**Question 7:** What do you think is the best solution to raise awareness in the policy-makers and to bring on a campaign of novel therapies equity of access with all Institution independently? (Fig. 11)

**Figure 1:** Geographical provenience of all Italian regions. Fig. 2: Health status: 916 suffer from chronic hepatitis C, 8% are unclassified (UIF or IF), 3% are recovered (TRH). Fig. 3: Distribution of the patients according to their genotype. Fig. 4: Distribution of the patients according to their subtype. Fig. 5: Distribution of the patients according to their age and gender.

**Figures:**
- Fig. 1: Geographical provenience of all Italian regions.
- Fig. 2: Health status: 916 suffer from chronic hepatitis C, 8% are unclassified (UIF or IF), 3% are recovered (TRH).
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