

## *The Lebanese LSICDM*

# Prevalence of hepatitis B and hepatitis C among intravenous drug abusers in the Lebanese population

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Injection drug users (IVDU) are prone to many blood born viral infections. Hepatitis B virus (HBV) and Hepatitis C virus (HCV) constitute an important public health concern in this high-risk group. The aim of the study is to calculate the prevalence of hepatitis B and C viruses among people who inject drugs (PWID) in Lebanon.

**Methodology:** We conducted a prospective cross-sectional study between June 2015 and June 2016 on PWIDs recruited through the Lebanese non-governmental organizations in collaboration with the Lebanese ministry of public health. The participants were tested for HBs Antigen and HCV antibody using rapid test kits. The prevalence of each virus was then calculated. The correlation between both infections and other possible risk factors was also analyzed.

**Results:** A total of 250 people were included in our study. 98% were males. Mean age was 31.9-year-old. The prevalence of HBV and HCV among PWID was 1.2% and 15.6%, respectively. Older age, longer duration of drug use, and the lack of awareness were found to be significantly correlated with higher rate of HCV infection. We noted a relatively high rate of sharing needles among PWIDs without significantly affecting the prevalence of both viruses.

**Conclusion:** IVDU remains a major public health concern in Lebanon, being one of the most prevalent subpopulations for chronic viral hepatitis namely the HCV. Appropriate screening strategies, targeted educational programs and adequate HBV vaccination are of extreme importance for further viral prevention among this high-risk group.

**Key words:** injection drug users; hepatitis C; hepatitis B; prevalence; Lebanon.

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