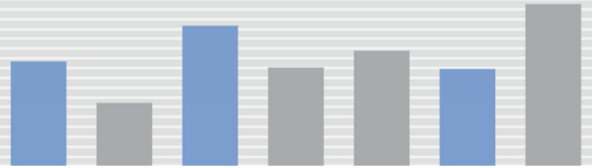




Fact sheet

from the EU drugs agency in Lisbon



HEPATITIS WEEK: 12–16 JUNE, LISBON

EMCDDA and ECDC join forces to address the challenge of hepatitis

(12.6.2017, LISBON) Hepatitis and other drug-related infectious diseases will be the focus of ‘**Hepatitis week**’, taking place at the **EU drugs agency (EMCDDA)** in Lisbon from 12–16 June ⁽¹⁾. The initiative will bring together some 100 specialists from: EU Member States, candidate and potential candidate countries to the EU, as well as partner agencies, civil society and professional organisations.

Viral hepatitis, particularly infection caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV), is highly prevalent among injecting drug users across Europe. For every 100 people infected with HCV (antibody-positive), 75 to 80 will develop chronic infection ⁽²⁾.

The week will kick off with a two-day meeting of the hepatitis B and C network of the Stockholm-based EU agency, the **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)** (12–13 June). It will close with the regular annual meeting of the **EMCDDA** drug-related infectious diseases (DRID) network of national experts (15–16 June).

A joint session on 14 June will provide the two networks with an opportunity to share expertise and experience and to discuss how Europe can improve its surveillance of, and response to, hepatitis among people who inject drugs (PWID). The experts will also discuss practical evidence-based strategies, share examples of good practice and identify solutions to common challenges.

Through plenary and ‘World Café’ interactive sessions, **Hepatitis week** will allow both expert networks to address the topics of epidemiology, responses and monitoring and share and discuss new studies, findings and experiences at regional, national and European level. The initiative will also facilitate technical work around the collection and analysis of the different components of the **EMCDDA** DRID key epidemiological indicator, namely: prevalence of infections among people using drugs; surveillance of diagnoses and testing; and behavioural data.

EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel says: ‘The prevalence of antibodies to the hepatitis C virus commonly ranges between 40% and 80% in national samples of injecting drug users in the EU Member States. People who inject drugs frequently accumulate risks, which can increase the likelihood of developing liver-related problems. Although there are now treatments available to cure HCV infection, these therapeutic options do not cover enough injecting drug users in Europe. Testing also remains insufficient and late diagnosis is widespread. The EMCDDA, through its new Strategy 2025, is committed to contributing to a healthier Europe by acting as a catalyst for improving the quality and delivery of responses to reduce the health and social consequences of drug use.’

Piotr Kamarz, Deputy Chief Scientist of ECDC says: ‘Bringing these networks together provides us with a great opportunity to draw on the wealth of expertise existing in Europe. It will also help us to move the public health agenda forward around hepatitis prevention and control among people who inject drugs. The elimination of hepatitis B and C in Europe is a huge challenge, especially among drug users, and this meeting will allow for discussion around practical strategies to tackle the problem. Collaboration,

communication and the sharing of good practice, through events such as this, are essential if the goal of elimination is to be achieved’.

Notes

⁽¹⁾ For more, see www.emcdda.europa.eu/meetings/2017/drid Further information will be made available following the meeting, including supporting technical documents, expert presentations and the main conclusions.

See also:

EMCDDA Insights No 23 *Hepatitis C among drug users in Europe: epidemiology, treatment and prevention*

www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/insights/hepatitis-c-among-drug-users-in-europe

www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2016/8/hepatitis-c-among-drug-users-in-europe

‘Hepatitis C treatment for injecting drug users’ (Perspectives on drugs)

www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/pods/hepatitis-c-treatment

Drug-related infectious diseases in Europe. Update from the EMCDDA expert network (2015)

www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communications/2015/drug-related-infectious-diseases-in-europe

Drug-related infectious diseases in Europe. Update from the EMCDDA expert network (2016)

www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/rapid-communications/2016/drug-related-infectious-diseases-in-europe

⁽²⁾ *European Drug Report 2017: Trends and Developments* (Chapter 3) — www.emcdda.europa.eu/edr2017