



## Knowledge, attitude and practice regarding COVID-19 vaccination among HCV infected patients in Georgia



Lasha Gulbiani<sup>1</sup>, Tiko Kamkamidze<sup>1</sup>,  
Ana Gamezardashvili<sup>1</sup>, George  
Kamkamidze<sup>2</sup>, Maia Butsashvili<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Health Research Union, Tbilisi, Georgia  
<sup>2</sup>Clinic NeoLab, Tbilisi, Georgia



### 1 Introduction

COVID vaccination coverage is low in Georgia (24.7%). There are different vaccine-related misconceptions, particularly among people with different chronic diseases, who are at greatest risk of COVID related health complications and death. From 2015 HCV elimination program is operated in Georgia, providing free HCV diagnostics and treatment with direct acting antiviral (DAA) drugs.

### 2 Aim

The aim of this study was to assess the COVID vaccine knowledge, attitude and practice among HCV infected patients enrolled in HCV elimination program in Georgia

### 3 Method

The interviewer administered questionnaire was used to survey the random sample of patients at one of the outpatient clinics providing HCV treatment services within HCV elimination program in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia. Three different groups of HCV patients were enrolled in the study: 1). Having diagnostic tests before the treatment, 2). Receiving the treatment with DAAs, 3). Having sustained viral load (SVR) test at 12-24 weeks after treatment. Patients with and without liver cirrhosis were enrolled in the survey. The survey tool contained the questions about COVID vaccine knowledge, vaccination history, reasons of vaccine refusal among those not receiving vaccine.

### 5 Conclusions

COVID vaccination coverage is very low among patients enrolled in HCV elimination program, including patients with liver cirrhosis. Targeted educational campaigns for people with chronic diseases are needed to fight vaccine misconceptions among this high-risk population

### 6 References

Prevention of the spread of coronavirus in Georgia.  
<https://stopcov.ge/>

### 7 Contact information

Health Research Union (HRU) – 47 Tashkenti str. Tbilisi,  
0160, Georgia  
Mobile number: +995 32 214447

### 4 Results

230 patients were interviewed in total. Out of these, 60 (26%) were females. 67 (29%) had advanced liver disease (F3 or F4 by liver elastography or FIB4score >3.25). Only 42 (18.2%) reported to receive two doses and 12 (5.2%) – 1 dose of COVID vaccine. The majority of study participants – 218 (94%) knew that COVID vaccine exists. Among the 176 (76.5%) not vaccinated patients the reasons of vaccine refusal were distributed as follows:

- > 45 (25.5%) do not wish to get vaccinated because of their disease (HCV infection);
- > 32 (18.1%) responded that they plan to get the vaccine;
- > 29 (16.4%) think they are not at risk of COVID related health problems,
- > 12 (6.8%) did not get the vaccine because they had COVID in the past and consider themselves defended against the disease,
- > 25 (14.2%) are afraid of side effects
- > 33 (18.7%) do not trust the vaccine.

Out of 67 patients with advanced liver disease only 14 (20.8%) were vaccinated. Among not vaccinated patients 38 (21.5%) had liver cirrhosis.

Insert Key  
Takehome  
Message  
here