

Improvement of health-related quality of life (HQoL) after HCV treatment with direct acting antivirals (DAAs) in Georgia

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Background: HCV causes significant morbidity and mortality worldwide. About 80% of people infected with the hepatitis C virus live in low and middle-income countries. Based on 2015 serosurvey national HCV seroprevalence in Georgia was 7.7% with 5.4% being chronically infected (HCV RNA positive). Georgia has launched hepatitis C elimination national program in 2015, resulting in important decrease in HCV RNA prevalence (from 5.4% to 1.8%) according to the study conducted in 2021. Data are limited on the role of successful antiviral treatment in changing the quality of life among Georgian patients. The aim of this study was to determine health-related quality of life (HQoL) among HCV infected patients in Georgia achieving sustained viral load (SVR).

Material and Methods: Prospective cohort study was conducted in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. For data collection the patient-reported outcomes (PROs) questionnaire was used to assess the HQoL of beneficiaries involved in the hepatitis C elimination program. The questionnaire included information on demographics (age, gender and residence) and self-reported health condition (general weakness, insomnia, lack of energy, muscle and abdominal pain, depression and etc). The data were collected two times - before the treatment and 12 weeks after the end of the treatment among patients achieving SVR.

Results: A total of 299 respondents were enrolled in the study. The mean age was 53 (age range 26-83) years. Most 244 (81.6%) were males. SVR test was done among 247 patients and achieved in 244 (98,79%). Respondents who did not complete the treatment or did not achieve SVR were excluded from the follow-up survey. 153 (62.7%) patients out of 244 achieving SVR agreed to participate. 294 (98.3%) participants reported that they had general weakness in the last two weeks before the start of the treatment with 62 (40.5%) after the treatment. Proportion of people with insomnia decreased 1.8 times after the treatment (from 272 (91.0%) to 78 (51.0%). After the treatment, self-perceived improvement of symptoms, such as lack of energy, abdominal pain, depression and worries that their health condition is getting worse, was observed. There was statistically significant improvement in liver fibrosis level (mean liver stiffness decreased from 21.5 kpa to 15.1 (p <0.0001)), ALT (from 116.3U/l to 27.6U/l (p <0.0001)) and AST (from 104.7U/l to 29.1U/l (p <0.0001)). There was no significant change in

the following symptoms: shortness of breath during daily activities, dry mouth, itching and concentration problem.

Conclusion: After the successful DAA treatment, the overall self-perceived health status improvement has been observed among patients with chronic hepatitis C.