LITHUANIAN PROGRAM FOR HEPATITIS C SCREENING: RESULTS OF THE FIRST 9 MONTHS OF THE PROGRAM AND POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR ELIMINATION

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Lithuania's national hepatitis C screening program, launched in May 2022 with GP-led testing of adults born 1945-1994 and high-risk groups, screened 547,627 people in nine months and identified 1.3% seroprevalence, but modeling shows treatment scale-up is needed to meet WHO 2030 elimination targets.

KEY POINTS

- Between May 2022 and January 2023, 547,627 people were screened for HCV antibodies with 1.3% testing positive overall; seroprevalence was higher in men (1.6%) than women (1.1%) and reached 31.7% among people who inject drugs and HIV-infected individuals.
- Viremia was detected in 58% of seropositive patients and 1,586 patients received direct-acting antiviral therapy in 2022, with treatment numbers increasing 330% in the final two months compared to the previous year.
- Markov modeling showed three scenarios: maintaining pre-screening treatment levels will not meet WHO targets; treating 70% of infected patients (13,000 in 2023/2024) will meet most but not all targets; treating all infected patients by 2030 would save 150 lives and prevent 90 cases of decompensated cirrhosis and 120 cases of hepatocellular carcinoma.
- This is the first such national screening initiative in Central and Eastern Europe, with general practitioners paid a special fee to promote and perform HCV antibody testing.
- Material is relevant to public health officials, hepatology specialists, and policymakers involved in viral hepatitis elimination programs.

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