

From failure to triumph: Managing HCV in the non-compliant elderly with DOTS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a significant global health challenge, affecting millions worldwide. The World Health Organization aims to eradicate HCV by 2030 through improvements in prevention and treatment. In 2019, Malaysia's Ministry of Health introduced guidelines promoting rapid initiation of direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) for managing Chronic Hepatitis C, targeting sustained virologic response (SVR) at 12-weeks of treatment. Despite enhanced access to DAAs and updated protocols, achieving SVR remains difficult, especially among vulnerable populations like the elderly in nursing homes. **Case report:** We present a case of a 67-year-old man living alone independently in a shelter home. Despite being asymptomatic, he tested positive for HCV during a routine check-up due to a history of intravenous drug use. His initial HCV viral load was 3,114,886IU/mL, and was started on a 12-week course of Sofosbuvir and Daclatasvir. But, the viral load was still 2,761,725IU/mL. His APRI score was 0.4, with normal liver enzymes and ultrasound of the hepatobiliary system. Poor compliance due to social issues, namely living in a homeless shelter without supervision for medications intake, lack of family support, and travel difficulties to clinic, led to failure in achieving SVR-12. To address this, we implemented the Direct Observational Therapy System (DOTS) at Klinik Desa and encouraged peer support from Persatuan Warga Emas Sejahtera Tanjung Malim (PERWARA). These measures successfully improved compliance, resulting in SVR after 24 weeks of DAA therapy. **Discussion:** DAAs have almost 99% cure rate but require strict compliance. DOTS, successfully used for tuberculosis, may enhance adherence to HCV medication and ensure successful treatment. **Conclusion:** Addressing factors contributing to HCV treatment failures in special populations is crucial. Implementing these strategies into national guidelines can help healthcare systems meet the specific needs of these groups and enhance treatment success.