

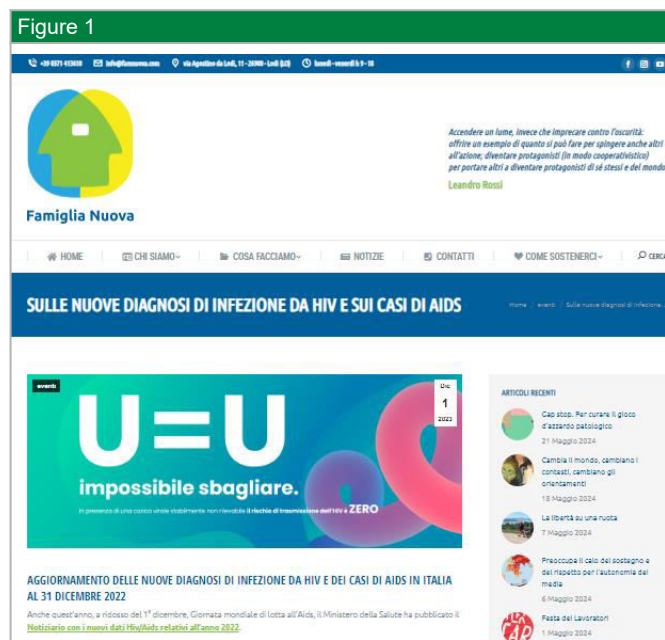
A QUESTIONNAIRE ADMINISTERED IN SERVICES FOR ADDICTS REVEALS FRAGMENTARY KNOWLEDGE OF HIV, HBV, HCV

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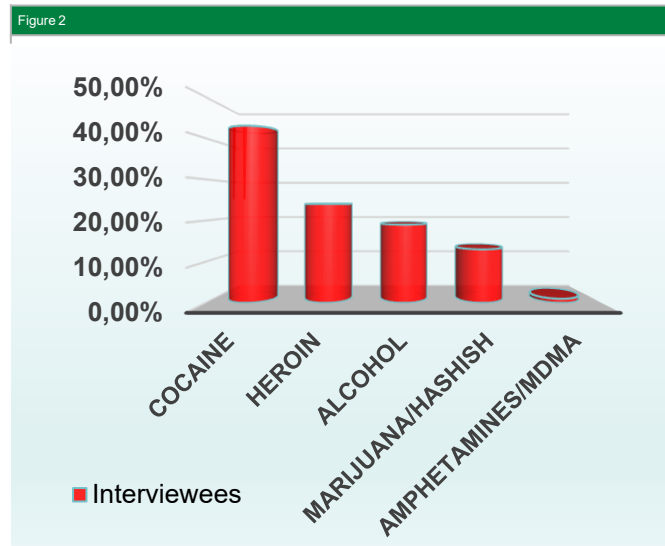
Background

- Little is known about the awareness of viruses transmitted through drug addiction and sexual route among persons belonging to rehabilitation center for drug users. A questionnaire was administered on knowledge of HIV (including post-exposure prophylaxis, PEP; pre-exposure prophylaxis, PrEP; undetectable equals untransmittable, U=U), HCV and HBV in the "Famiglia Nuova" community in Lodi (Figure 1), where in-house counseling is not always provided. The issue of sexual activity under the influence of drugs was also addressed.



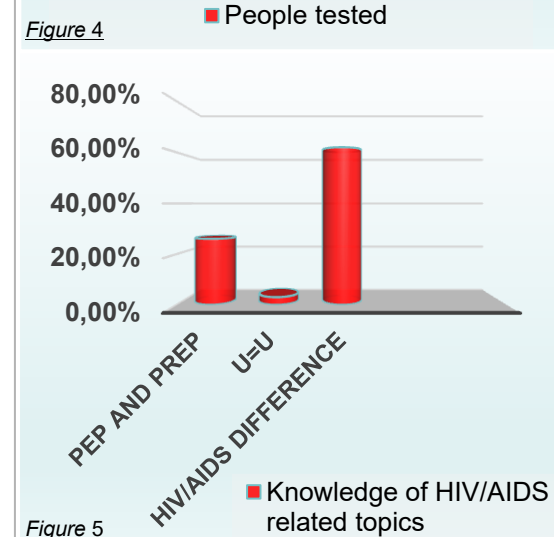
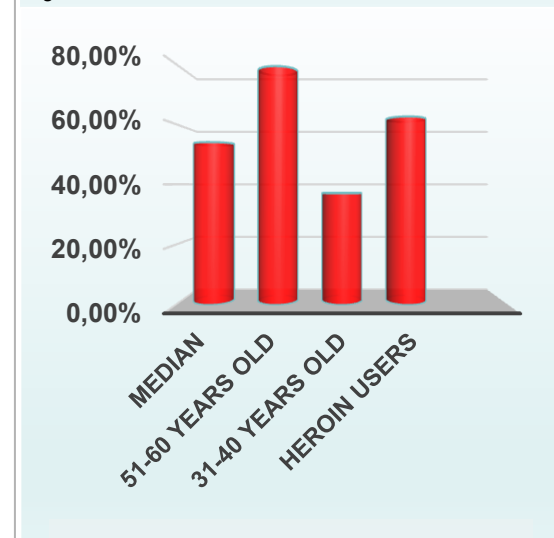
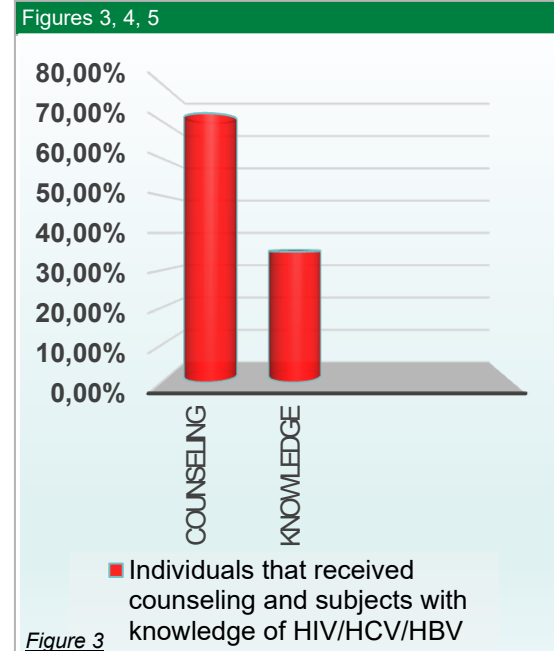
Material and Methods

- One hundred males responded to the survey. Items were related to type of drug use, perception of discrimination, knowledge of HIV, HCV, HBV, available diagnostic tests and therapies or vaccines, including PEP, PrEP, and condom use.



Results

- Interviewees were 100 of whom 83.2% were Italians (median age: 41).
- Substances taken were cocaine, heroin, alcohol, marijuana/hashish in 43%, 24%, 19%, and 13% of cases, respectively; 1% of subjects used psychotropic drugs, amphetamines, or MDMA. *These results are depicted in Figure 2.*
- Regarding stable or occasional or mercenary relations, condom use reported was in 22%, 46% and 59%, respectively. In particular, 94% of individuals declared who had sex under the influence of drug: in such circumstance condom use was reported in 46%, while for 54% of intercourses condom was not used or not remembered.
- On average, 72% of individuals reported receiving counseling on sexually or blood transmitted viruses. However, only 35% of respondents admitted that had some knowledge on HIV, HCV and HBV, with a prevalence of 54.8% in the 41-50 age group and of 45.8% among heroin users. *This data is shown in Figure 3.*
- Persons who had been tested for HIV, HCV and HBV were 54% and the most represented age group was that between 51 and 60 years (79.2%), while those between 31 and 40 years were screened at 37% of cases; with reference to the substance consumed, the largest group screened was heroin users (62.5%). *This result is reported in Figure 4.*
- Concerning cure possibility for HIV, HCV and HBV, 38% of survey takers knew that such viruses are treatable or can be prevented: the most informed age group was that with 41-50 years (50%), while cocaine users showed the most consciousness (55.3%).
- PEP and PrEP are known by 26% of persons; the U=U meaning is unknown in 97% of cases; 38% of the sample surveyed did not know the difference between HIV and AIDS. *The result is illustrated in Figure 5.*
- Finally, 71% of respondents admitted that experienced discrimination, and among them, occurring at 6% in a health care setting.



Conclusions

- An analysis of knowledge level in people living in "Famiglia Nuova" reveals that there is widespread misinformation; discriminatory factors are also present. These elements can be a strong barrier accessing testing, may reduce quality of life and lead to high social costs. For this reason, it is essential that social and medical care services work together to provide the most appropriate tools tailored to the needs of individuals residing in care communities.