

**Assessment of a new HCV prevention tool among  
injecting drug users: the "Stericup"  
Towards an effective Method**

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**Objective.**

The importance of the HCV prevalence among drug users in France (50-70%) cannot be only explained by the injection with a syringe previously used by another injector.

Apart from sharing needles and/or syringes, sharing the spoon where the drug is diluted and using the drug remaining in the "cottons" used as filters are ways of transmission.

In a Belgian transversal study, 54% of drug users who never shared syringes were HCV positive.

In the Seattle cohort, 54% of HCV infections in injection drug users who did not share syringes were attributable to cooker/cotton sharing.

In previous studies we observe that HCV transmission may frequently occur when an HCV positive IDU prepare the mixture for two or several users in a cooker with his own syringe already used. The next injector, using the contaminated cooker, doesn't assess the risk because he believes that the use of his own syringe is sufficient to protect him.

A drug injection safe kit, the Steribox, is distributed in pharmacies and in vending machines for several years in France.

Until last year, the Steribox contained syringes, sterile water, swabs and prevention leaflets.

To adapt the Steribox to these ways of transmission of HCV infection and communicate new messages of prevention to IV drug users, a new sterile preparation kit was created : The Stericup. It contains a sterile single use recipient with a system to avoid burn, a sterile filter and a dry post-injection swab. It permits an aseptic preparation of the injection.

The purpose of this controlled study was to assess the impact of the Stericup on drug users knowledge and practices, before its introduction into the kit Steribox at a national level.

**Methods.**

Volunteer Pharmacies of the intervention group distributed the Stéribox with the Stericup, and the pharmacies of the control group distributed the usual Stéribox. In both groups, customers buying an injection safe kit completed a self-administered questionnaire. The proportion of correct answers to the 8 questions regarding the hepatitis C virus was calculated, and compared between groups.

**Preliminary results.**

304 questionnaires were collected, 99 in pharmacies of the control group, 205 in pharmacies of the intervention group. In the control group the average proportion of correct answers was 72% (min 55% -max 93%), and 93% in the intervention group (min 87% - max 97%). For 6 questions, a statistically significant increase of knowledge level was observed between the groups. For 1 question, this increase was not significant.

The knowledge of the risk for cooker sharing increased from 55% to 95 %.

**Conclusion.**

This study demonstrates the interest of the drug preparation injection safe kit Stéricup as an information medium in a population of IV drug users. Since last month, the Stericup is included in the Steribox.



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*E. Imbert & coll. Preventing HCV -Stericup- Towards an Effective HCV Prevention Method. Abstract. IHRA Conference, June 2000.*