

PLUS: An innovative approach for effective and psychological support in HCV for PWIDs, people in substitution therapy and the ones striving to reach abstinence

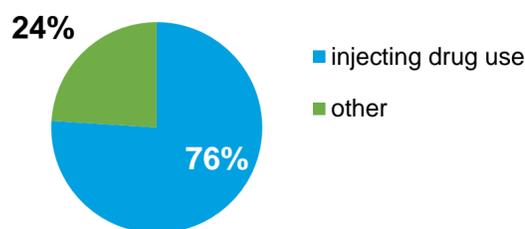
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DESCRIPTION

PLUS is an initiative aiming to improve quality of life and medical care for People Who Inject Drugs (PWIDs), those in substitution therapy, and the ones striving to reach abstinence.

Current and former PWIDs belong to a group with a high risk for being infected with the hepatitis-C-virus (HCV). Due to the complex psychological, social and health problems of PWIDs, people in substitution therapy and the ones striving to reach abstinence, it is particularly difficult to reach them regarding prevention, health education, and treatment.

Routes of new infections¹



PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT

Key challenge to reach PWIDs concerning their hepatitis-C-infection is to consider their **prioritization of problems**. Therefore, PLUS focuses on **general health-related aspects, creative and leisure activities** as a part of their daily structure, and a lack of knowledge about **HCV** itself. The **HCV peer project** (patients sharing their experiences with other patients), and the co-creation of **informational materials** by PLUS-clients themselves provide a simple way of sharing knowledge and experiences, as well as increasing the credibility of the information within the target group.

64 % of PLUS-clients were motivated to get tested for hepatitis C.²

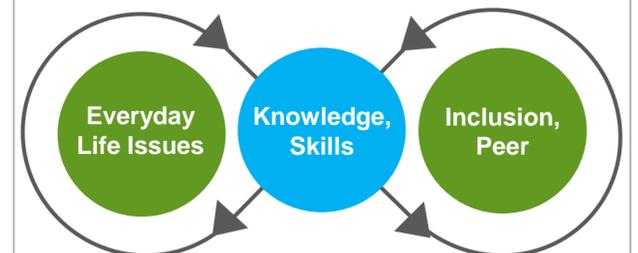
59 % of PLUS-clients state a higher quality of life thanks to the PLUS-activities.²

Furthermore, PLUS also addresses the **professional support network**: social workers receive a variety of **educational modules**; cooperation and collaboration with physicians enables **seamless transitions in the care system** and **long-term health successes** supported by **continuous psychosocial support**.

93 % of social workers were able to consult clients more competently regarding health issues as hepatitis C after participating in an HCV-training event.²

WHY IS THIS INNOVATIVE?

A variety of **support offers complement each other** within PLUS to maximize its effect: expansion of individual strengths, supportive accompaniment, and a peer-PLUS-peer concept combine low-threshold addiction support, psychosocial counselling, and HCV self-help in an exceptional way.



The key objectives are stabilization, personal development, health awareness, and social participation of PWIDs, people in substitution therapy and the ones striving to reach abstinence. This **comprehensive approach involving clients** is what characterizes PLUS and makes it such a one-of-a-kind project.

Participate

Integrate

Be Part of

153,000

people with hepatitis C in Germany diagnosed⁴

20%

of diagnosed patients are in substitution⁶

30,000 patients

in substitution with hepatitis C in Germany diagnosed⁵

10%

of patients in therapy are in substitution⁷

In 2014, the **Unique Alliance for Action** consisting of Caritasverband für Stuttgart e.V., Deutsche Leberhilfe e.V., and AbbVie Deutschland GmbH & Co. KG initiated PLUS, an innovative project with the goal of achieving a "more" in participation (both actively and passively) and therefore helping those affected in rejoining society.

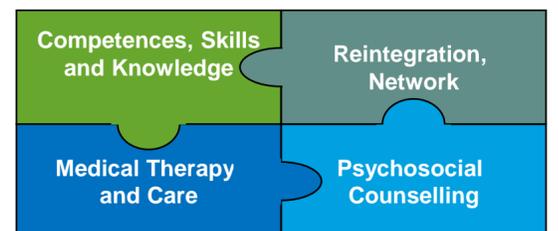
The project started with **207** affected participants in PLUS-activities in Stuttgart,³ followed by a second PLUS-project in Ludwigshafen. Other German cities and regions are preparing to offer PLUS-programs.

Vision of PLUS in Germany

Network of PLUS-Cities to reach affected people with hepatitis C



The initiative PLUS consists of different modules. Thus, it can be adapted to the regional setting addressing the local needs and be expanded by other ideas.



Key ideas of the innovative PLUS approach:

- collaboration as key for access to PWIDs or patients in substitution
- direct involvement of patients: increased acceptance
- tailored education about HCV and new therapies: e.g. reduction in fear of side effects
- identification and implementation of HCV ambassadors (Peer-2-Peer)
- involvement of payers to reduce fear of recourses
- political will: direct involvement of politics

CONCLUSIONS

The external scientific evaluation carried out by the Institute for Applied Social Sciences Stuttgart (IfaS) was able to prove multiple positive effects of PLUS:²

- The longer and more intense the various PLUS-offerings are used by the target group, the higher the sustained benefit regarding quality of life, health related benefits and self-management abilities, and positive health-related behavior overall.
- Both qualified staff and affected people broaden and deepen their knowledge on HCV and share this knowledge competently.
- Tailored informational materials show motivating effects on positive behavioral changes up to the willingness to be tested for HCV and to receive treatment.
- An important success factor for an HCV therapy is a stable life situation.
- PLUS is a cross-sectoral, holistic, needs-oriented, comprehensive approach, which is authentic and therefore a good door-opener to a difficult-to-reach group.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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