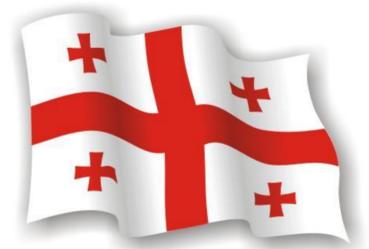




Increased HIV Case Detection through Integration of HIV Testing in Georgian Hepatitis C Elimination Program Screening Activities



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Objective

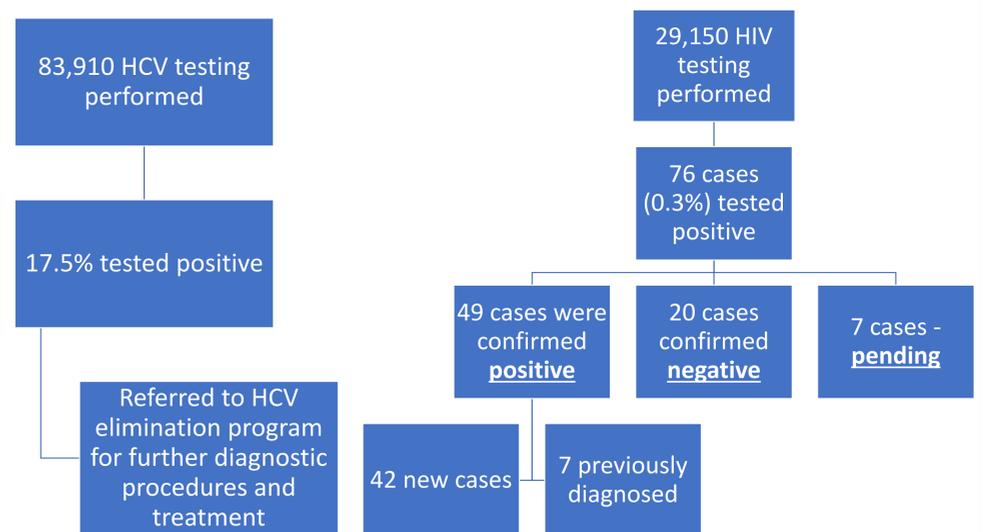
The objective of this programmatic approach was to increase HCV and HIV case detection in general population by combined testing strategies.

Methods

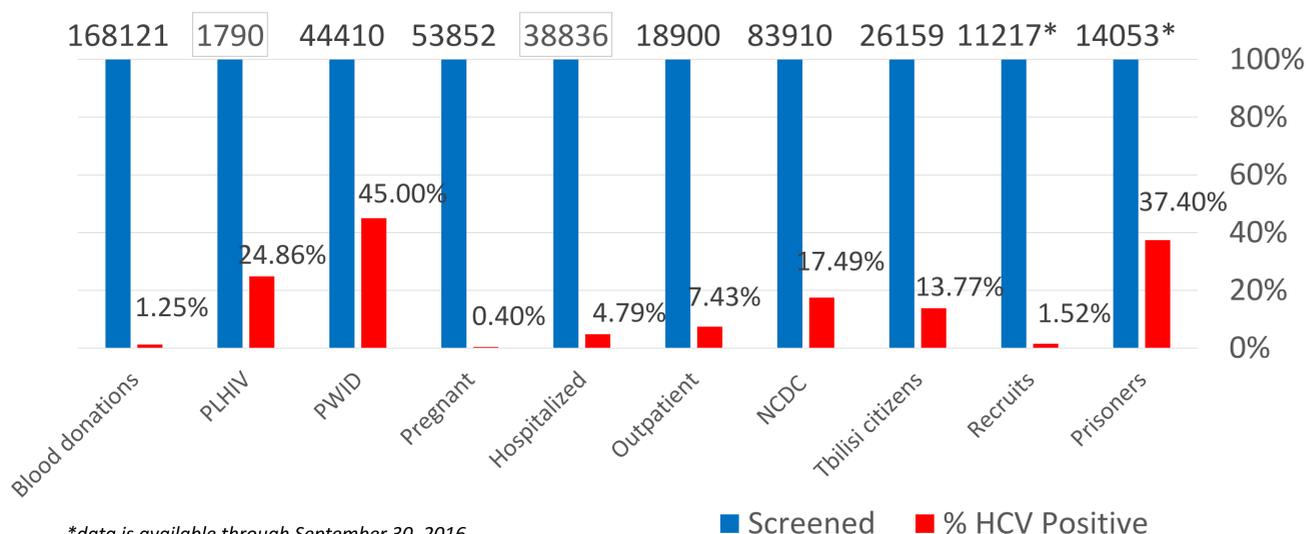
In 2015, Georgia launched unprecedented National Hepatitis C Elimination Program, aimed to dramatically decrease HCV prevalence in the country by 2020 (currently seroprevalence of HCV in Georgia is 7.7% and prevalence of chronic disease is 5.4%) Starting from November, 2015, any citizen of Georgia can obtain free HCV testing at the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health (NCDC) and its regional branches. In addition, every person willing to be tested for HCV was offered free HIV test. Both HIV and HCV testing are performed by rapid immunochromatographic tests. Positive HIV cases were referred to national AIDS center for confirmation.

Results

Through December, 2016, 83,910 voluntary HCV testing and 29,150 voluntary HIV testing were performed at NCDC and its regional network. Rate of positive HCV test result was 17.5%. All positive cases were referred to HCV treatment component of National Elimination Program. Rate of positive HIV test result was 0.26% (76 out of 29,150). Out of 76 persons who tested positive, further diagnostic procedures confirmed HIV in 42 new cases who were then enrolled in the HIV treatment program.



HCV Screening in different programs 2015-2016



Conclusions

Free of charge HIV testing was offered only for high-risk groups until 2015. Preliminary results from combined testing indicates that HIV prevalence in general population remains low.

Considering the low prevalence of HIV in Georgia, extra cases found by the combined screening approach was significant contributing factor for early detection of HIV cases. Nationwide HCV elimination program appears to be an effective mechanism that can be used to increase case detection of HIV in Georgia and Integration of HIV testing within HCV screening should be maintained and further expanded.