

Injectable therapy in HIV: the role of physician and patient attitudes

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Background: To understand potential barriers to the use of injectable ARVs from the perspective of physicians and patients we examined perceptions of injectable ARVs among patients and prescribers. We identified barriers/drivers to prescribing enfuvirtide (ENF), to patients accepting ENF and potential disconnects between physicians and patients.

Methods: 499 HIV-treating physicians and 603 ARV-experienced patients (≥ 8 ARVs) completed structured interviews (European Union and USA). Prescribing practices were indicated by:
1) History of ENF prescribing: non-prescribers (0 patients on ENF), lower prescribers (1-4), higher prescribers (≥ 5);
2) Choosing either an ENF- or oral-based regimen for each of two patient case histories generally indicated for ENF and
3) Actual prescribing from patient records.
Patients were shown an ENF profile and rated their likelihood of accepting ENF if recommended by their physician. Physicians and patients rated their strength of agreement with statements regarding potential barriers/motivators to prescribing/using self-injectables.

Results: Similar patterns of physicians' beliefs about injectable ARVs predicted all three prescribing indicators. Non-prescribing was associated with the belief that patients have negative perceptions of ENF leading to treatment refusal and low compliance, reduced confidence in the efficacy of ENF and the belief that ENF is harder to justify (time/resources) compared to oral-based regimen (all $p < 0.05$). 65% of patients said they would be moderately (41%) or highly (24%) likely to accept ENF if their physician recommended it, yet, 75% of patients had never discussed ENF with their doctor. Of these patients 23%, 40% and 37% indicated that they would be unlikely, moderately likely or likely to accept ENF therapy.

Conclusions: Physician inherent beliefs about injectable therapy are important predictors of prescribing behaviour while patient beliefs are predictors of reactions to a treatment offer. These data suggest a disconnect between physician and patient beliefs, with patients having more positive attitudes towards injectable ARVs than anticipated by physicians.