

Implementation of the ReLink-C strategy in hospitals in Spain (ReLink-C Observatory Spain)

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INTRODUCTION

- In Spain, in recent years, various strategies have been implemented to achieve the elimination of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection by 2030, in line with the objectives of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Plan for the Elimination of Viral Hepatitis.¹⁻³
- Among these, the ReLink-C strategy aims to identify patients diagnosed with HCV infection who have been lost to follow-up and show no evidence of cure, and link them back to the healthcare system
- Hospitals that implemented this strategy did so independently, taking into account their available resources and the specific needs of their setting. Currently, the data generated are not collated in a shared database.



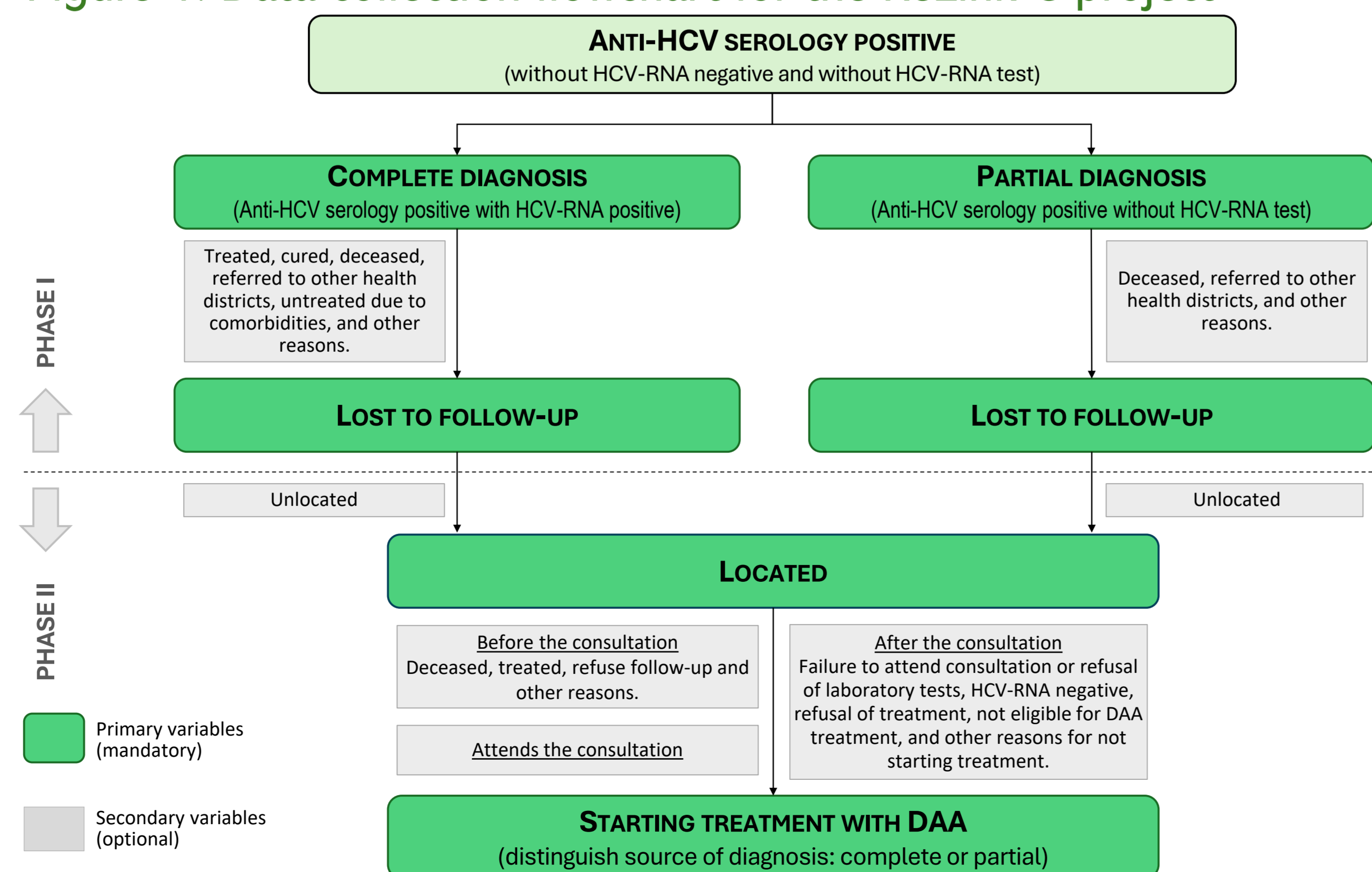
AIM

The objective of the study was to compile and present the aggregated results of the implementation of the ReLink-C strategy in Spanish hospitals.

METHODS

- A retrospective, cross-sectional, multicentre observational study was conducted to integrate the data (previous results) from hospitals that had previously implemented the ReLink-C strategy.
- For data collection, a common information flow (Fig. 1) was designed, which included patients with a complete diagnosis (anti-HCV serology positive with HCV-RNA positive) and patients with a partial diagnosis (anti-HCV serology positive without HCV-RNA testing).
- To optimise data collection from hospitals, primary (mandatory) and secondary (optional) variables were established.
- Data collection was carried out between April and October 2025, using an online questionnaire (*Microsoft Forms*).
- Of the total number of centres participating in the ReLink-C strategy, those whose data availability aligned with the established workflow and met the defined criteria for data collection were selected.
- The Andalusian Coordinating Committee for Ethics in Biomedical Research approved the study protocol in March 2025.

Figure 1. Data collection flowchart for the ReLink-C project

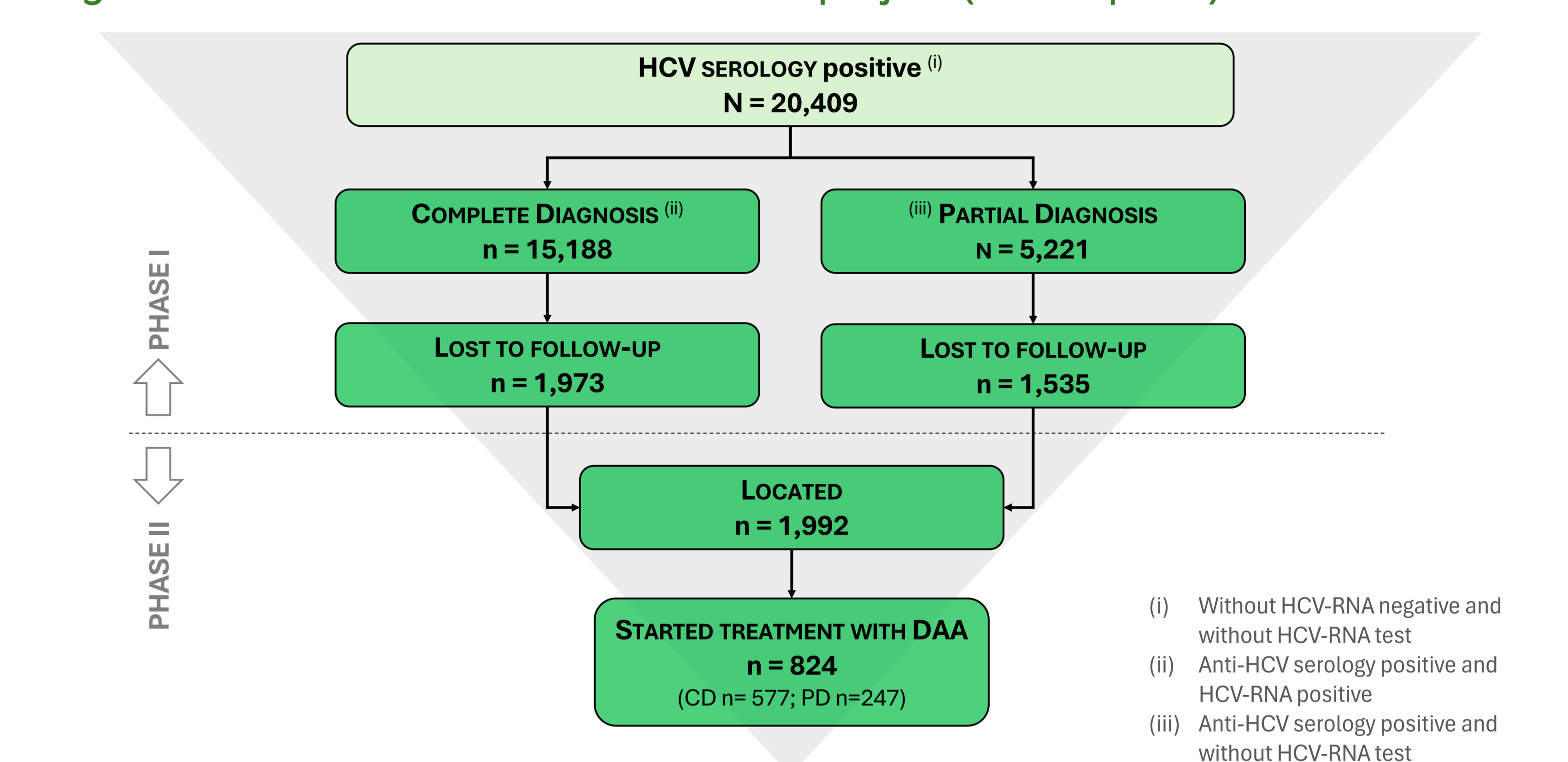


Abbreviations: DAA, direct-acting antivirals; Anti-HCV, detection of antibodies against the hepatitis C virus; HCV-RNA, hepatitis C virus RNA detected (viral load).

RESULTS

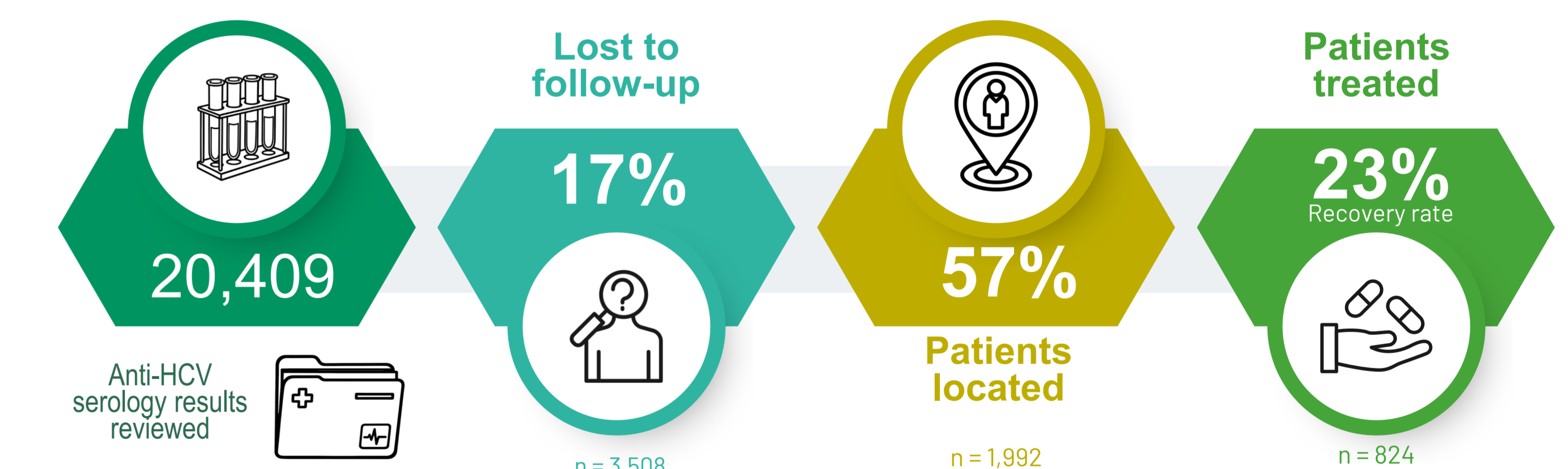
- Information from 25 hospitals participating in the ReLink-C strategy was included (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).
- A total of 20,409 serology results were reviewed, of which 15,188 (74%) corresponded to patients with a complete diagnosis and 5,221 (26%) to patients with a partial diagnosis.
- A total of 3,508 (17%) patients with HCV infection lost to follow-up were identified: 1,973 (56%) with a complete diagnosis and 1,535 (44%) with a partial diagnosis.
- Of the total number of HCV patients lost to follow-up, 1,992 (57%) were located, of whom 824 (41%) started treatment with direct-acting antivirals (DAA).
- The DAA treatment recovery rate, calculated over the total number of patients lost to follow-up, was 23%.
- The results for the optional variables were heterogeneous, making a joint analysis unfeasible.

Figure 2. Pooled results of the ReLink-C project (25 hospitals)



Abbreviations: DAA, direct-acting antivirals; Anti-HCV, detection of antibodies against the hepatitis C virus; HCV-RNA, hepatitis C virus RNA detected (viral load); CD, complete diagnosis; PD, partial diagnosis.

Figure 3. Scope of the ReLink-C project results (25 hospitals)



CONCLUSION



The findings confirm the effectiveness of the ReLink-C strategy in retrieval, relinking and the access to treatment for HCV patients who had been lost to follow up within the healthcare system, strengthening its value as a benchmark model for achieving the goal of eliminating hepatitis C in Spain.

REFERENCES

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