

Hepatitis C Testing and Linkage to Care Project

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Hepatitis C Epidemiology and Impact

- According to the CDC (data published in 2013), 3.5 million Americans have chronic Hepatitis C infection
- 50% are undiagnosed
- Only 9% have been successfully treated
- Chronic HCV is the leading cause of Liver transplantation and Liver Cancer in the United States
- In Worcester County we receive an average of 50-60 reports of chronic Hepatitis C per year. We expect this number to increase with expanded testing.

CDC Recommendations – HCV screening in Baby Boomers

- Of the 3 million people with chronic Hepatitis C in the US, 75% were born during 1945-1965.
- Annual HCV associated mortality in the US increased more than 50% from 1999-2007. People born during 1945-1965 account for 73% of these deaths.
- ALL PERSONS born between 1945-1965 should receive one-time testing for HCV regardless of HCV risk.

CDC Testing Recommendations for HCV Infection

- Adults born during 1945-1965
- Anyone who currently injects drugs or has **ever** injected drugs (even if only one time).
- Anyone who received blood, blood components, or an organ transplant before July 1992.
- Anyone who sustained a needle stick, sharps exposure, or mucosal exposure from an HCV-positive patient/blood.
- Children born to HCV positive mothers.
- Persons with certain medical diagnosis (long-term dialysis, HIV, persistently abnormal LFTs, received clotting factor prior to 1987)

State of Maryland Requests for Proposal – HCV testing Project

- In December 2016, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene invited local health departments to submit proposals for implementation of HCV testing within their agencies. Agencies who were approved would receive free HCV rapid test kits and training.
- Worcester submitted their proposal on December 22, and received approval on January 13, 2017.

Worcester's HCV testing and Linkage to Care pilot project

- Worcester will utilize the OraSure Rapid HCV testing kit and offer free screening to persons at high risk for HCV infection including:
 - Persons being served in our Behavioral Health program (with IDU risks or cocaine ingestion, tattoo or body piercing risks)
 - Persons being tested for HIV through our HIV CTR program with HCV risks
 - Persons identified by other LHD providers as high risk for HCV (chronically elevated ALT, uninsured or underinsured persons born between 1945-1965).

Components of the HCV testing visit

- HCV risk screening and education
- HCV rapid screening testing (finger stick, results in 20 minutes)
- Post-test counseling to include either HCV prevention education or linkage to care and treatment information
- Referral to insurance navigator if uninsured
- Referral and warm hand-off to health care provider for further diagnostic testing, evaluation, and treatment (if appropriate)
- Referral to patient assistance programs for access to medications

HCV testing project - evaluation

- All persons testing positive for HCV antibody will be linked to a medical provider for treatment evaluation.
- Contact will be made with the provider to assure the client attended their first medical appointment and to determine disposition (treatment ordered, treatment accepted by client, treatment begun).
- If treatment was ordered, we will follow-up at the conclusion of the treatment to determine if cure was attained.

Chase Brexton Hepatitis C treatment project

- Chase Brexton, Federally Qualified Health Center specializing in infectious diseases, is in the final stages of developing Hepatitis C treatment clinics on the Lower Eastern Shore.
- The clinics will be held on a monthly basis (one Friday a month) in each of the three lower shore counties.
- The clinics will be held at the health department sites.
- Clients will be seen once a month and will have their medications dispensed to them at their clinic visit.

Next steps (all in progress).....

- DHMH to finalize reporting requirements and confirm State lab capacity for diagnostic testing
- Chase Brexton to finalize project and sign Memorandum of Understanding with Lower Shore Health Departments
- Provider and public education regarding project and availability of testing and treatment

Future plans

- At this point in time there is no funding for this project which is the reason for limiting the population tested to those who already receive services from the health department or the uninsured/underinsured.
- As funding is received, testing could be expanded.
- Development of a HCV case management program (short-term case management during treatment phase, 6-12 months of follow-up).

References

- Centers for Disease Control
 - MMWR, 2013, Testing for HCV Infection: An Update of Guidance for Clinicians and Laboratorians
 - A Guide to Comprehensive Hepatitis C Counseling and Testing