Rates of Testing for Hepatitis C Virus in HIV-Infected Injection Drug Users and Men Who Have Sex With Men Receiving Medical Care

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Background

- In New York City (NYC), 50% - 90% of injection drug users (IDUs) are infected with Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)
- HCV infection (HCV+) is associated with a high risk of chronic liver disease (60% - 70%) and cirrhosis (10% - 20%)
- Co-infection with HCV and HIV accelerates the progression of both diseases
- The CDC recommends that all IDUs be tested for HCV [MMWR, 1998, 47 (RR19): 1 – 39]

Objectives

- To describe rates of HCV testing and infection in HIV-infected IDUs and men who have sex with men (MSM) attending HIV clinics in NYC
- To examine factors associated with HCV testing and infection

Methods

- Setting
  - Four HIV clinics in NYC
- Sample
  - Patients recruited for the Adult Spectrum of Disease (ASD) Study, a longitudinal study of HIV-infected persons in care
  - 200 IDUs, 116 MSM
- Inclusion Criteria
  - First clinic visit between 2/99 and 2/01
  - History of IDU or MSM
- Data Sources
  - Medical record review
  - HCV laboratory results (if available)
- Primary Outcomes
  - Proportion tested for HCV or history of HCV (+)
  - Proportion HCV (+) based on positive HCV antibody test, detectable HCV RNA, or physician note

Results

- Among HIV-infected IDUs receiving HIV care, 93% were tested for HCV and the prevalence of HCV infection was 78% among those tested
- Testing for HCV was similarly high (88%) among MSM attending the same HIV clinics, although the prevalence of HCV infection was lower (17%)
- Nearly half (43%) of IDUs not tested had only one clinic visit

Conclusions

- Health care providers at these four HIV clinics in NYC follow the CDC recommendation to test IDUs for HCV
- HIV-infected MSM are also being tested for HCV at very high rates
- The 17% (95% CI, 10% - 24%) HCV prevalence among MSM is at the high end of the range reported for MSM in the United States (2% - 18%)
- Further examination is needed to identify behaviors associated with increased risk in the MSM group, including unacknowledged IDU
- A follow-up survey is needed to determine if HCV positive patients are receiving treatment

Acknowledgements

Adult Spectrum of Disease (ASD) Staff, New York City Department of Health, New York, NY
Data Abstraction
- Ann Marie Benjamin
- Donna Thompson
- Colin Rosich
- Donna Thompson

Presented at the XIV International AIDS Conference July 7 - 12, 2002 Barcelona, Spain