Beating Hep C in Inner-City Baltimore

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Almost all of a large group of inner-city Baltimore individuals coinfected with HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV) were recently cured of hep C at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, showing the potential for successful treatment in a traditionally challenging group of people.

Researchers studied 2014 to 2016 data on 255 HIV/HCV-coinfected individuals enrolled in studies of HIV or HIV/HCV coinfection at the university.

Seventy-three percent of the study group were men, and 88 percent were Black. Fifty-seven percent had a psychiatric condition, and 73 percent had a history of illicit drug use. Ninety-seven percent were taking antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for HIV.

Of the 179 individuals for whom there was such behavioral information, 30 percent reported actively using alcohol, with 7 percent reporting hazardous levels of use; 14 percent reported using marijuana; 8 percent reported cocaine use; and 6 percent reported heroin use.

A total of 96.5 percent of the overall group was cured of hep C. The cure rate was 98 percent among those with an undetectable HIV viral load, compared with 88 percent of those with a detectable HIV viral load.

“The model of care we describe in our manuscript would be easy to replicate in other HIV care settings,” says Oluwaseun Falade-Nwulia MBBS, MPH, an assistant professor of infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins and the study’s lead author. “The hope is that data such as ours provide additional impetus to expand access to hepatitis C treatment

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