Hep C Has Plummeted Among Men Living With HIV in London

Researchers attribute this dramatic shift to routine testing and access to direct-acting antiviral treatment for hep C.

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New cases of hepatitis C virus (HCV) among HIV-positive men who have sex with men (MSM) in London and Brighton, England, fell by nearly 70% between 2015 and 2018.

Publishing their findings in Clinical Infectious Diseases, Lucy J. Garvey, MD, of Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, and colleagues conducted a retrospective cohort study of more than 9,000 HIV-positive MSM at risk for HCV who attended one of five HIV clinics in London and Brighton between 2013 and 2018. The sites reported all their diagnoses of recently acquired, or acute, HCV infections during the study period.

The patients at these clinics were provided access to regular HCV screening.

During the study, there were 378 diagnoses of acute HCV infection, including 292 first-time infections and 86 instances of reinfection after the virus had been cleared. The acute HCV diagnosis rate per 1,000 cumulative years of follow-up peaked at 14.6 diagnoses in 2015 and then declined to 4.6 diagnoses by 2018.

The study authors noted that they observed a 78% reduction in the diagnosis of a first hep C infection and a 68% reduction in the overall acute HCV diagnosis rate between 2015 and 2018.

The time from the men's HCV diagnosis to the point when they started treatment for the virus declined from 30 months in 2013 to 3.7 months in 2018.

"Our study has shown how in London and Brighton, regular screening and greater access to these new treatments have resulted in a significant fall in new cases of hepatitis C and transmission of the infection," Garvey said in a press release.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

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