Recognizing HIV and Hepatitis C Virus Coinfection

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During the month of May, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) recognizes Hepatitis Awareness Month and Hepatitis Testing Day on May 19. It is a time to raise awareness about the impact of viral hepatitis among people with HIV and encourage those with HIV to get tested for hepatitis C virus (HCV).

HIV and viral hepatitis are syndemic conditions, or a set of linked health conditions, that adversely interact with each other and contribute to a greater impact of disease. In the United States, we are working to address this through both the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan.

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HCV is one of the primary causes of chronic liver disease in the U.S., and approximately 21% of people with HIV also have HCV.

Like HIV, HCV can spread:

- Through direct contact with a person with HCV's blood (most commonly through injection drug use): According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), nearly 75% of people with HIV who report a history of injection drug use also have diagnosed HCV.
- Perinatally: HCV may be transmitted via mother to child. Pregnant people can pass these infections to their infants. HIV-HCV coinfection increases the risk of passing on HCV to the baby.
- Sexually: Although sexual contact is an uncommon means of transmission, men who have sex with men with HIV are at particularly high risk of contracting HCV sexually.

Given the risk of HIV/HCV coinfection, it is important for people with HIV to understand the risk, take steps to prevent infection, and know their status. Treatment is available that can cure HCV

and reduce the chance of developing liver damage, liver cancer, or the risk of death.

People with HIV should be tested for HCV when they are first diagnosed with HIV and begin treatment. People with HIV who have ongoing risk factors for getting HCV should be tested annually.

HRSA's Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program works to improve coordination of linkage to and retention in HCV and treatment for people living with both HIV and HCV.

We recognize how important it is for health care providers to understand HCV and to use their trusted relationship with patients to encourage them to get tested for HCV, and have developed initiatives and resources to help health care providers treat people who have or are at risk for HIV/HCV coinfection:

- The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Part F Special Projects of National Significance Program has developed various initiatives, including:
  - Leveraging a Data to Care Approach to Cure Hepatitis C within the RWHAP: Aims to link people with HCV and HIV to care by leveraging existing public health surveillance with clinical data systems.
  - Hepatitis C Treatment Expansion Initiative: Focused on HCV treatment for patients with HIV. Grant recipients implemented HCV treatment into their HIV primary care settings.
    The Implementation Guide synthesizes the findings from the initiative. Health care provider sites and community partners with an interest in treating HCV among their patients with HIV can use the guide.
- The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Part F AIDS Education and Training Center Program provides trainings and resources on HIV/HCV coinfection, including:
  - Myths about Treating Substance Users with Hepatitis C Virus: This infographic identifies common misconceptions associated with treating HCV in substance users with HIV. The resource is available as a flyer and training slide set.
  - National AETC Curriculum on HIV/HCV Co-infection: This curriculum aims to increase health care provider knowledge of HIV and HCV coinfection among people of color in the U.S. and its territories.

This Hepatitis Awareness Month and Hepatitis Testing Day, learn and share the syndemic

approach to HCV and HIV and encourage HCV testing to your colleagues and communities.

Learn More:

- Visit: https://ryanwhite.hrsa.gov.
- Visit: https://findhivcare.hrsa.gov/ to find a RWHAP medical provider and locate HIV care.
- Visit: TargetHIV.
- Sign up for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Listserv.

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