



A Community-based Approach to Viral Hepatitis in Central Appalachia

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Disclosures

- Jane Crowe is Hepatitis C (HCV) Program Manager at Knox County Health Department which has received research grants from Gilead Sciences, Inc.
- Knox County Health Department is a metropolitan public health department located in the southeastern United States that sees over 60,000 patient visits annually.

Background/aims

- ⦿ Knox County is vulnerable to rapid dissemination of HIV/HCV due to injection drug use.
- ⦿ Prior to initiation of the project, universal HCV screening was non-existent and no treatment resources were available for persons without health insurance.
- ⦿ Aims: to quantify HCV prevalence and risk factors and to increase HCV education, prevention, harm reduction, and linkage to care

Methods

- ① Universal, opt-out HCV screening was provided for patients age 14 and over at five clinics
- ① Risk factors were assessed by self-report at time of testing, including history of intravenous drug use (IVDU) and incarceration
- ① Descriptive data was used as a tool for building a community-wide response to HCV

Results

- Between June 1, 2016 and March 31, 2019, 18,280 unique patients received an HCV test; 13.6% were antibody positive (Ab+) and 9.5% showed current infection (Ab+/RNA+).
- IVDU showed the highest HCV exposure rate with 70% of People Who Inject Drugs (PWIDs) testing Ab+, followed by intranasal drug use (38%), incarceration (32%), and homelessness (31%).
- 75% of RNA+ individuals lacked health insurance.

Conclusions/implications

- Baseline data demonstrated need for outreach in non-clinical settings, increased stakeholder engagement and justified funding for HCV treatment resources.
- 70% of RNA+ persons received education, harm reduction, and linkage to care services in clinical and outreach settings.
- The number of providers treating HCV for uninsured persons increased from 0 to 30 between 2016-2019.
- *What's next?* Increased funding to expand HCV treatment and harm reduction among PWIDs. Meaningful engagement of PWIDs in program and policy development.

Acknowledgements

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Knoxville, Tennessee, showing a dense urban area with various buildings, including a prominent skyscraper and a water tower with a spherical top. The city is surrounded by lush green hills and mountains in the background, with some peaks covered in snow. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day.

📍 Thank you to our clinical teams and community partners who provide compassionate care to persons vulnerable to and living with HCV.