

C the light! Exploring dynamic changes in hepatitis C epidemiology, screening, and treatment

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Background: Hepatitis C is common, deadly and curable. A major public health epidemic, it affects close to 4 million Americans, and kills more Americans than HIV, hepatitis B and tuberculosis combined. New all-oral therapies for hepatitis C can cure over 90% of those treated with few side effects and with a short 12-week course. However, many people with hepatitis C are unaware of their infection and access to curative therapy remains limited, especially for underserved populations.

Methods: Our workshop will focus on areas of dynamic change in hepatitis C. We will discuss the changing epidemiology, focusing on the epidemic of new infections among young injection drug users. We will discuss hepatitis C screening recommendations and how these are applied in medical and public health settings, including barriers and facilitators to screening and linkage to care. We will describe current available therapies for hepatitis C and challenges to accessing these medications.

Results: We will present results of our screening and linkage to care cascade, as well as the impact of our primary care-based hepatitis C clinic on antiviral treatment outcomes. We will focus on ways that workshop attendees can apply these principles to hepatitis C screening in their individual settings throughout the state of Georgia.

Conclusions: We will conclude by making the compelling argument that combining public awareness of the disease, screening, linkage to care and treatment can lead to hepatitis C elimination in an unexpectedly short time frame.

Key words: hepatitis C, epidemiology, screening, underserved populations, chronic disease prevention

<https://doi.org/10.21633/jgpha.7.130>

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