Building Local Capacity for Treatment & Cure
Webcast 2.5

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Webcast Overview

1. Linking Testing & Treatment
2. Importance of Primary Care
3. Strengthening Referrals & Linkage
4. Strategies to Address Local Provider Capacity
Linking Testing & Treatment
Low Likelihood of Reaching Treatment & Cure

- After receiving a reactive antibody test, it is decreasingly likely patients will receive a confirmatory RNA test, be prescribed treatment, and be cured.

- Providers often do not have the resources to effectively navigate recently diagnosed patients into treatment, or to provide support to keep them in treatment to the point of cure.

## Components of Successful Linkage to Care

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| RNA Test      | • Next step in testing after antibody test  
                 • First step in linkage to treatment                                        |
| Referral      | • Often to a specialist for further testing and treatment initiation         |
| Treatment     | • Without supportive services, patients are often lost to follow up before reaching treatment  
                 • Without support during treatment, patients may not complete therapy |
Importance of Primary Care
Roles of Primary Care Providers

• Identify new infections through antibody and confirmatory RNA testing
• Initiate the referral process
• Provide initial supportive services, including health education, information on the referral and treatment process, and first impressions on the treatment experience
• Provide a critical connection to the health care system for people who inject drugs, the homeless, or who have mental health concerns
• For those not ready or able to initiate treatment, primary care providers can monitor their liver health, provide preventive care and immunizations, and offer harm reduction education and support
• Refer patients to specialist provider for evaluation, further testing, and treatment initiation
Strengthening Referrals & Linkage
Characteristics of Strong Referral Networks

• Integrated across primary care providers and specialist providers
• Minimize patient’s burden of seeking out treatment
• Provide end-to-end patient support to reduce opportunities for patients to be lost to follow-up
• A key role of public health in strengthening referral networks is facilitating relationships between primary care providers and specialist providers
• Assess providers for:
  • Ability to take new patients
  • Process and key staff to coordinate referrals
  • System for health information exchange
  • Willingness to coordinate referrals and work with patient navigators
  • Capacity for using new technologies, such as text message reminders for results and appointments
Patient Navigation & Peer Support

• Patient navigation can:
  • Connect patients to community resources
  • Provide support to overcome practical barriers such as transportation to medical appointments
  • Assist in financial and insurance navigation

• Peer support approaches can:
  • Help to overcome mistrust of health care system
  • Increase patient engagement in care
  • Mitigate effects of stigma and improve knowledge of HCV and treatment process
  • Provide practical and emotional support from patients going through similar experiences

• Health departments can:
  • Establish patient navigator positions in directly-administered clinics and funded partner organizations
  • Educate community partners and providers on patient navigation techniques
  • Collect and distribute information on peer support groups and networks to providers
Health Education, Substance Use Treatment, and Harm Reduction

- Health education can be used to overcome patient misinformation about HCV
- Patients who inject drugs can be directed to harm reduction resources, including syringe access programs if available
- Patients who use substances who are ready to access substance use treatment should be directed to treatment programs
- Health departments can:
  - Distribute patient-oriented educational materials to providers
  - Conduct provider capacity building on educating patients to overcome misinformation; on harm reduction communication, approaches, and resources available locally; and on local substance use treatment programs
  - Directly administer syringe access programs, facilitate a community partner’s administration of syringe access program, or ensure providers know of resources available to patients who inject drugs
Strategies to Address Local Provider Capacity
Assessing Provider Capacity

• Brief surveys of local providers to:
  • Determine ability to take on new patients
  • Assess experience or interest in treating hepatitis C
  • Gauge willingness to train and mentor other providers
  • Measure awareness of and comfort with harm reduction techniques

• Pharmacy surveys to determine:
  • Locations where newer hepatitis C pharmaceuticals are routinely stocked
  • Prescribing frequencies to know number of providers prescribing hepatitis C treatment
Public Health Detailing

• Structured educational visits to providers to:
  • Distribute materials and information
  • Educate providers on best practices for prevention and chronic disease management, referral network information, community resources, and effective strategies for patient support

• Most effective when it is:
  • Conducted in-person by health department staff with established relationships with providers
  • Concise
  • Highly focused
  • Supplemented by high-quality educational materials

• NACCHO has developed a detailing kit for health departments to use with their providers – now available on NACCHO website alongside educational series
Providing Treatment in Primary Care Settings

• Fully integrated HCV testing and treatment for uncomplicated cases with primary care providers

• Possible because new medications offer significantly simpler prescribing protocols and have fewer side effects

• Several benefits to this treatment model:
  • Patients can stay in their medical home
  • Treatment can be provided in the context of comprehensive and holistic care
  • Long-standing patient-provider relationships leveraged to improve treatment outcomes
  • Wider availability of primary care providers and greater cost-effectiveness of primary care provider-based care improves accessibility and sustainability of care
Public Health Support for Treatment in Primary Care Settings

• Develop and disseminate guidance and best practice information

• Facilitate training opportunities

• Advocate to lift insurance and Medicaid provider restrictions

• Promote consultative or mentoring relationships
  • Project ECHO or similar models

• Disseminate referral information on primary care providers who treat hepatitis C to difficult-to-reach and high-risk populations
  • Through syringe service programs
  • During homeless outreach
  • At substance use treatment facilities
NACCHO’s Educational Series on HCV & Local Health Departments: Module 2

2.1: Planning for Action at the Local Level
2.2: Creating a Local HCV Epidemiologic Profile
2.3: HCV Testing Challenges and Systems-based Solutions
2.4: Targeted Outreach and Other Strategies for Increasing HCV Testing: Working in Settings that Serve High-risk Populations
2.5: Building and Supporting Local Capacity for HCV Care, Treatment, and Cure
2.6: Advocating for Sensible Policies in the Age of HCV Cure