The Intersection of Opioids and Viral Hepatitis – A Public Health Crisis

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Hepatitis A Outbreaks in Multiple States

- CDC has been assisting with multiple multi-state hepatitis A outbreaks
  - Primarily among homeless persons, persons who use injection and non-injection drugs, and their close contacts
  - More than 2,100 cases; 49 deaths
  - Over 1,500 hospitalizations
  - Tested more than 1,600 specimens
- Major challenge for jurisdictions
Acute Hepatitis C Infections Continue to Soar

Over 22,000 Americans die of viral hepatitis each year

Source: National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS)
Increased Transmission of Viral Hepatitis to Infants

- Without preventive treatment, 40% of infants born to HBV-infected mothers will develop chronic infection.
- Without treatment, a quarter will die from liver disease.
- From 2009-2014, HCV infection among women giving birth nearly doubled.
Why is viral hepatitis getting worse?
Geographic correlation between opioid prescriptions, drug poisoning deaths, and HCV infections

Amounts of opioids prescribed, by county, 2015

Drug poisoning death rates, by county, 2016

Reported New HCV Infections, 2013-14
Other Severe Infectious Consequences to Opioid Use

From 2002 to 2012:
• Hospitalizations due to opioid use and:
  • Endocarditis ↑46%
  • Septic arthritis ↑166%
  • Epidural abscess ↑164%
  • Osteomyelitis ↑115%

Other costly health consequences:
• Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome increased 300% from 1999-2013
  • Cost >$1.5 billion per year
What can we do?

Prevention of Harmful Opioid Use
Prevention of Viral Hepatitis
Treatment of Substance Use Disorder
Viral Hepatitis Treatment
44 states and Puerto Rico have areas that are experiencing, or at risk for, increases or outbreaks of HCV/HIV.
Comprehensive Community Action

- Mobilize multi-sector community action, including healthcare, education agencies, public health, and law enforcement

- Comprehensive community prevention programs
  - Syringe Services Programs (SSPs) prevent overdoses; link patients to treatment; do not increase drug use or crime
  - People who used SSPs 3 times more likely to stop injecting
  - ~50% reduction in incidence of HCV and HIV with a greater effect when combined with substance use treatment

Improve Disease Prevention Strategies

- Respond quickly and comprehensively to Hepatitis A clusters
- Ensure **Hepatitis B** vaccines and testing are reaching the people who need them
- Increase screening, diagnosis, and treatment of Hepatitis C and reduce barriers to treatment access

Access to HCV treatment among Medicaid enrollees varies by state

Source: NVHR, Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, Harvard University; StateofHepC.org
Think Big, Act Fast

- The opioid epidemic is increasing infectious diseases
- Situation is not inevitable
- Acting quickly and at scale will prevent spread of infectious diseases and reduce overdose deaths
- Successful action will reduce drug use, save lives, and save money