A peer response to hepatitis C in persons who inject drugs

Virginia Harm Reduction Coalition

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I have no relevant financial relationship within the past 24 months
Mission: Improve the health of our community.  
How: advocating for, developing, and implementing evidence-based solutions to address the adverse effects of drug use by providing outreach to marginalized, stigmatized, and criminalized populations, advocating for health policies that address their specific needs.
Services:

- Benefit enrollment services
- Case management / patient navigation
- HCV and HIV rapid testing
- COVID 19 nasopharyngeal testing
- Overdose education and Naloxone distribution
- Sterile use supplies to prevent infection
- Peer support
- Advocacy
- HIV testing begins October 2020

2020 Results:

- 1,200 people enrolled in VHRC services
- 42,761 doses of naloxone
- 2,907 reversal reports
- 254,834 syringes distributed
- 322 HCV tests with ~150 reactives
- 12 people made first HCV appointment, 5 completed treatment
Cancer prevention

Through reduction in HCV

- Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC) 9th leading cause of cancer-related death in the US.
  - 2 year mortality rate = 50%
  - 5 year mortality rate = >90% (1)
  - Even without HCC, HCV kills more people in the US than the next 60 leading infectious diseases combined (3)

- Individuals with HCV are 17 times more likely to develop HCC than HCV-naive individuals (2).

- One of the populations with the highest rate of HCV are persons who inject drugs (PWID) with a prevalence of around 70% (4).

- A combination of opiate substitution therapy, high coverage syringe programs, and HCV antiviral treatment can cut HCV prevalence by greater than 50% (5).

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1. Golabi, Fazel, Olgonsuren, Sayiner, Locklear, & Younossi, 2017
2. Andrade, Junior, Melo, De Souza, Silva, & Paraná, 2009
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016
5. Martin, Hickman, Hutchinson, Goldberg, & Vickerman, 2014
Results

- 322 HCV tests with ~150 reactives
  - Lower positive percentage accounted for by open public testing in addition to PWID
- 12 people made first HCV appointment, 5 completed treatment
  - Partner HCV clinics were severely limited due to COVID19
- 600+ individuals educated about HCV prevention
- 254,834 syringes distributed
  - Along with other sterile safer use materials
- Founding member of Virginia Hepatitis Coalition
  - Develop treatment and testing capacity, policy advocacy
  - Members: Carilion, Virginia Tech School of Medicine students, University of Virginia Telemedicine, Virginia Department of Health, National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable and more
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