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Living with Hepatitis C: A Vermont Needs Assessment

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Background

Hepatitis C (HCV)
- Viral infection of the liver spread primarily via blood-to-blood contact (e.g., intravenous drug use [IVDU])
- United States: 3.2 million chronic HCV infections (2010)1
- Vermont: 1.63 cases per 1000 people (2012-2013)2

Barriers to Care
- Exclusion of current IV drug users from HCV treatment programs despite their high rates of infection3
- Lack of support, causing decreased treatment adherence4
- Poor access to treatment: cost, transportation, competing priorities of housing, addiction management, and food5

HIV and HCV
- Research has shown that the multidisciplinary and integrated HIV model is appropriate for HCV6
- Vermont CARES
- Non-profit organization that provides comprehensive care services with HIV in Vermont

Methods

- Conducted a literature review and consulted Vermont experts on HCV
- Distributed a 20-question survey to seven sites across the state over a six-week period to identify the demographics and needs of Vermonters with HCV (Figure 1)
- Data were compiled into Microsoft Excel, and analyzed graphically and using VassarStats with non-parametric statistical methods.

Results

- A total of 48 surveys were collected from clinics, needle exchanges, and case management facilities across the state of Vermont.
- The average annual income of all respondents is $15,000 +/- $7,700 with a male to female ratio of 1.61 and an age range from 18-60+
- 62% of all respondents report having had HCV for 6 or more years.
- 47 out of 48 report having health insurance, with 90% having coverage through Medicare/Medicaid, and 90% having a primary care physician.

Discussion

- Our sample’s proportion of HCV acquisition from IVDU is similar to the national figures (58% vs. 60%)7.
- Respondents are well-connected to the healthcare system.
- Most respondents (77%) feel that at least one service currently offered by Vermont CARES would be very helpful to them. In addition, patients with HCV are comfortable receiving services from Vermont CARES, with only 4% reporting discomfort. This makes Vermont CARES a very appropriate organization for patients seeking HCV-related support services.
- 75% of respondents reported not currently pursuing HCV treatment. Respondents with case managers are three times more likely to be getting treatment than those without case managers. Expanding case management at Vermont CARES could improve treatment rates.

Recommendations

- It is likely Vermont CARES case management of active IV drug users and others with HCV would result in their successful treatment and a reduced community viral load.

References


Figure 1: Map of Vermont

Map of Vermont with cities and towns marked. A legend indicates the distribution of sites across the state where surveys were administered. The map highlights the geographic coverage of the survey, with concentric circles representing different distances from the state capital. The map serves to visually convey the comprehensiveness of the data collection process.

Figure 2: How Did You Acquire Hepatitis C?

A pie chart illustrates the distribution of how respondents acquired Hepatitis C. The chart shows a breakdown of IV drug use and non-drug use categories, with a significant portion attributed to IV drug use. This visual representation helps to understand the primary transmission route among the surveyed population.

Figure 3: Care ACCESSED (PAST 12 MONTHS)

A graph shows the percentage of respondents who accessed care services over the past 12 months. Key metrics include community health centers, care provider, primary care provider, and emergency room/hospital. The data reflects the utilization patterns and accessibility of care services among the surveyed population.

Figure 4: CASE MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT

A chart illustrates the case management and treatment options for respondents. Categories include community health centers, case manager, and other support services. The visual representation highlights important support mechanisms and their impact on patient care.

Figure 5: Living with Hepatitis C Needs Assessment / Case Management Services Offered by VT CARES

A flowchart outlines the various case management and treatment services offered by Vermont CARES. The diagram includes integrated services, support groups/services, and transportation. The flowchart serves as a visual guide to the comprehensive support network provided by Vermont CARES.

Figure 6: Comfort Receiving VT CARES Services

A table displays the comfort levels of respondents receiving case management services. The table includes categories such as integrated services, support groups/services, and transportation. The data provides insight into the perceived comfort levels of respondents regarding the services they receive.

NOTES

*Not significant after modified Bonferroni correction.
**No significant differences in degree of comfort among these groups.