

NEW QUESTIONS ABOUT HCV FROM A NEW GENERATION

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Background:

Approximately 3.5 million Americans are infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV), with the majority of incident HCV infections attributable to injection drug use in rural areas of the US. As the incidence of HCV infection rapidly increases, especially among young adults, public health initiatives aimed at patient and provider education are needed to dispel misconceptions regarding HCV assessment and treatment. This HCV Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) is intended to support and complement the knowledge and expertise of medical and public health professionals who are responsible for educating and treating patients.

Methods:

Field workers in the *VALE Hepatitis Treatment and Integrated Prevention Services* study identified questions commonly asked during HCV screening and educational sessions. From 2016-2018, 185 young adults (45% women; 86% Latino/a) under the age of 30 who inject drugs and reside in Rio Arriba or Doña Ana counties (New Mexico) were enrolled. The research team compiled de-identified questions during field enrollments.

Results:

FAQs were reviewed and categorized into five major domains, including risk, prevention, screening, treatment, and post-treatment. FAQs were addressed by a team of medical and public health professionals, utilizing the most current research and recommendations, and distributed to participants with similar questions. *VALE* staff have directly observed how having this information can empower individuals to change their injection behavior and educate their peers.

Conclusion:

This FAQ sheet addresses important gaps in HCV knowledge among young adult patients who are at high risk for infection. The FAQs also highlight the importance of risk education counseling provided by frontline public health providers as well as access to safe and effective HCV treatments for young adults who inject drugs. Equipping public health and medical officials with readily available, current resources like this may improve understanding about HCV in this unique patient population and may diminish common misconceptions about HCV.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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