

BUILDING BRIDGES OVER TROUBLED WATERS: HCV SCREENING AND LINKAGE TO CARE IN THE AGE OF THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

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Background:

Beginning in 2015 Imagine Hope began supporting HCV screening and linkage at behavioral health clinics serving individuals with opioid use disorders. Now with 41 clinic partners at both traditional and medication assistance treatment (MAT) programs we have screened over 45,000 individuals for HCV finding 7.5% to be HCV RNA + and in need of care.

While there is a robust system of care for HIV in the United States; a national system of care for uninsured individuals in need HCV treatment does not exist. This is especially challenging in light of the ongoing increases in injection drug use secondary to the opioid epidemic.

Description of model of care/intervention:

Because appointments at charity clinics are hard won, involved long wait times, sobriety requirements and transportation challenges, we began to support some of our partner MAT clinics in building capacity for HCV treatment “in-house”. This initiative involved a partnership with content experts and staff at MAT clinics. Staff attended training to prepare them to offer services. Beginning with 1 clinic in 2017 there are now 5 MAT clinics in Georgia treating HCV onsite.

Effectiveness:

This initiative received enthusiastic response from clients. A total of 225 clients have been linked to care with 95 (42%) of those treated “in-house”. Medications were obtained via patient assistance programs from pharmaceutical companies. These were clients that would have not otherwise have had access to HCV treatment.

Conclusion and next steps:

MAT and HCV treatment can be delivered concurrently. This one stop shop approach is client focused and effectively removes service delivery barriers. A newly formed HCV ECHO program in Georgia will offer ongoing support to these and future MAT clinics that commit to this emerging best practice.

Disclosure of Interest:

None