

MORE THAN TESTED, CURED: A HOLISTIC MODEL OF HCV CARE IMPLEMENTED AT SYRINGE SERVICES PROGRAMS

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Background: To reduce the burden of hepatitis C (HCV) and reach elimination goals, we must increase treatment among people who inject drugs (PWID). Our three harm reduction organizations solicited the perspectives of drug user union and syringe services programs (SSP) participants to identify effective ways to engage PWID in HCV treatment. Recommendations included a holistic approach and co-locating treatment at SSPs.

Description of model of care/intervention: In 2021, we developed HCV treatment programs co-located at SSPs that provide complementary care to address concurrent needs of PWID living with HCV. We provide HCV treatment at fixed and mobile SSP sites and offer medication lockers for PWID who need secure access to their medication. We also provide HCV treatment via telemedicine. To meet other needs of PWID that may impact their engagement in HCV care, we provide sterile syringes and injection supplies, testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, primary care, suboxone, wound care, and COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.

Effectiveness: While we are still refining our care model, we treated 136 PWID for HCV last year. We have increased engagement among PWID who had previously refused treatment. Telemedicine has allowed us to reach rural PWID. Through collaborations with HCV providers who treat our participants, we have reduced the need for SSP personnel to provide case management and have been able to redirect those efforts to supporting more PWID initiate treatment.

Conclusion and next steps: Identifying novel models of care to effectively engage PWID in HCV treatment is key to reduce infections among those most impacted by HCV. Incorporating the insights of PWID and drug user unions is important to design programs that will appeal to PWID living with HCV. We continue to refine and evaluate our treatment programs and identify optimal complementary services to further engage PWID in HCV care.

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