September 2017

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

VA IS A NATIONAL LEADER IN HEPATITIS C TESTING, CARE, AND TREATMENT

HCV Testing
- VA has higher rates of birth cohort screening (people born between 1945-1965) and HCV reflex confirmatory testing than any other large health care system in the US.
  - As of July 2017, 79.5% of VA’s birth cohort had been tested
  - As of December 2016, 98% of all patients tested for HCV had reflex confirmatory testing performed

HCV Treatment
- Treatment of HCV can prevent the progression of advanced liver disease (e.g. cirrhosis) and help prevent hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), end-stage liver disease, and death.
- All Veterans with hepatitis C in VA care are eligible for treatment. Veterans with HCV are generally referred by their primary care provider to the local VA HCV clinic for evaluation and treatment; at many VAs, the local HCV clinic is conducting active outreach to Veterans known to have HCV to schedule appointments for such evaluation. To qualify for medical evaluation for treatment, a Veteran has to be enrolled in VA health care and be diagnosed with HCV.
- VA has treated more patients for HCV than any large health care system in the US.
  - Since the availability of all oral HCV antivirals in 2014 through August 2017, VA treated over 96,000 patients and continues to treat approximately 1,500 Veterans every month.
  - Cure rates with all oral HCV antivirals is over 90%.
- VHA has minimized barriers to HCV treatment
  - HCV anti-virals are prescribed based on clinical considerations, not cost
    - All FDA-approved HCV anti-virals have been added the VA National Formulary.
  - No requirement for liver biopsy prior to treatment
  - No minimum length of abstinence from alcohol or substance use prior to treatment

HCV Care
- Every Veteran in VA care diagnosed with HCV is followed in VA’s National Hepatitis C Clinical Case Registry.
- VHA’s National Viral Hepatitis Program has coordinated and supported hepatitis C care in the field for over 15 years. The program has:
- Developed tools, training, and resources for VA clinicians and patients
- Published standardized policies and guidelines for diagnosis, anti-viral treatment, and management of advanced liver disease
- Adopted recommended birth cohort and high risk testing policies
- Pioneered integrated care for hepatitis C patients
- Implemented system re-design: Adopting VISN and VAMC projects to remove local barriers to access through Lean Management to address gaps in HCV care and treatment across the system.

- It is estimated that as many as 30 percent of the Veterans in VA care with HCV who are awaiting treatment are not currently willing or able to initiate HCV treatment. VA is taking steps to more effectively address this issue by increasing availability of treating providers and staff to provide care for treatment limiting co-morbidities and issues of homelessness (psychiatric, psychosocial, case management), training new providers, and expanding the use of telehealth and ECHO modalities.