



April 2019

## **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 March 2019, 84.3% of VA's birth cohort had been tested

#### 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 March 2019, VA treated 118,279 patients and an average number of 201 Veterans are started on treatment every week.
  - Cure rates with all oral HCV antivirals is 95%.
- 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 between 10,000-15,000 Veterans in VA care with HCV who are awaiting treatment are not currently willing or able to initiate/complete 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.