

Community pharmacy-based models of care for hepatitis C testing and linkage to care: interim results from a national cohort study

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Background/Approach:

EXPAND-C has developed two innovative models of hepatitis C (HCV) care in community pharmacy settings to increase accessibility of testing and linkage to care. Community pharmacies dispensing opioid agonist treatment are highly accessible settings in the community for people to engage in HCV care. Pharmacies choose to participate in a nurse-led or pharmacist-led model of care.

Analysis/Argument:

The nurse-led model involves pharmacies hosting an EXPAND-C nurse who provides, education, INSTI HCV antibody point-of-care testing (POCT), on-the-spot venipuncture (for HCV RNA and treatment work-up) if indicated and referral for care. The pharmacist-led model involves the pharmacist providing education, INSTI HCV antibody POCT, and referral for care if indicated. We will measure the care cascade and evaluate the acceptability and feasibility of each model.

Outcome/Results:

At the time of analysis (February 2026), the nurse-led model had run for 280 days across 37 pharmacies and enrolled 407 participants. The pharmacist-led model had run for 58 days across 6 pharmacies and enrolled 39 participants. In the nurse-led and pharmacist-led models respectively, 46% (n=187/407) and 74% (n=29/39) of participants reported a previous HCV antibody result and 53% (n=214/407) and 26% (n=10/39) had an INSTI POCT. Of those tested, 29% (n=62/214) and 10% (n=1/10) recorded an INSTI positive result in the nurse-led and pharmacist-led models respectively. Due to the short period elapsed, HCV RNA results were available only for the nurse-led model where 12% (n= 25/201) of participants who had pathology were RNA positive. Of 62 participants who returned an INSTI positive test and agreed to pathology testing, 33% (n=13/40) were RNA positive.

Conclusions/Applications:

Offering a variety of models including those incorporating POCT in community pharmacies provides individuals with increased opportunities to engage with and be linked into HCV care.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

JSD has received research and consultancy income to their institution from Gilead Sciences and Abbvie. AJW has received investigator-initiated funding to their institution from AbbVie, Cepheid and Gilead Sciences. JR has received consultancy income from Abbvie, and consultancy income and support to attend an international conference from Gilead Sciences. All other authors declare no conflicts of interest.

