

IMPLEMENTATION OF ROUTINE HIV/HCV SCREENING AND LINKAGE TO CARE IN THE IDEA EXCHANGE; MIAMI, FL

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Background:

Hepatitis C (HCV) is the most common infectious disease among people who inject drugs (PWID). Engaging PWID in harm reduction services, such as needle exchange programs, is pertinent to reduce HCV and HIV transmission. Additionally, testing for HIV and HCV among PWID is important to improve identification and linkage to care rates. This project looks at the implementation of HIV and HCV testing at the IDEA Exchange in Miami, FL; Florida's first and only needle exchange program.

Description of model of care/intervention:

The IDEA Exchange implemented dual routine, anonymous, opt-out, universal HIV/HCV antibody screening of all participants at initial enrollment. Reactive HIV Ab patients were given a second rapid test of a different brand; if reactive again, that participant is seen as HIV positive and linked to appropriate care. Reactive HCV Ab patients receive subsequent blood draw. The anonymous blood specimen is then sent to a partnering lab where samples are frozen and analyzed for HCV RNA. Viral loads are reported back to the IDEA Exchange, and patients are referred to the onsite linkage to care coordinator in order to be actively linked to HCV care. Both HIV and HCV Ab negative participants receive subsequent testing every 3 months after enrollment to capture seroconversion.

Effectiveness:

Implementation of the new screening protocol occurred March 1st, 2018. HIV and HCV testing numbers were compared 4-weeks pre and 4-weeks post implementation. Overall testing numbers increased by 283% and 203% for HIV and HCV, respectively. Biggest increases were seen in testing at 3-month participant follow up, with testing increasing by 700% and 1650% for HIV and HCV, respectively.

Conclusion and next steps:

Implementation of this model showed higher rates of HIV and HCV testing at initial enrollment and 3 month follow-up. Universal screening and routine testing among PWID through needle exchange can increase identification of new HIV and HCV infections.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

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