

## Chronic Hepatitis C Virus Screening: The Role, Strategies and Challenging of Primary Healthcare Faced to Augment and Identify Asymptomatic Infected Patients

**Authors :** Tarek K. Jalouta, Jolietta R. Holliman, Kathryn R. Burke, Kathleen M. Bewley-Thomas

**Abstract :** Background: Chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is one of the leading causes of liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma. In the United States, HCV screening awareness, treatment, and linkage to care are under continues ascending progress. However, still millions of people are asymptotically infected and undiagnosed yet. Through this community mission, we sought to identify the best and the newest strategies to identify those infected people to educate them, link them to care and cure them. Methods: We have identified patients that did not have a prior HCV screening in our Electronic medical record (EMR) including all our different hospital locations (South Suburban Chicago, Northern, Western and Central Indiana). Providing education to all Primary care/Gastroenterology/Infectious diseases providers and staff in the clinic to increase awareness of the HCV screening. Health-related quality of life, chronic clinical complications, and demographics data were collected for each patient. All outcomes of HCV antibody-reactive and HCV RNA-positive results were identified and statistically analyzed. Results: From July 2016 to July 2018 we screened 35,720 individuals of birth cohort in our different Franciscan's health medical centers. Of the screened population, 986 (2.7%) individuals were HCV AB-reactive. Of those, 319 (1%) patients were HCV RNA-positive, and 264 patients were counseled and linked to providers. 34 patients initiated anti-HCV therapy with successful treatment. Conclusions: Our HCV screening augmentation project considered the largest screening program in the Midwest. Augmenting the HCV screening process through creating a Best Practice Alert (BPA) in the EMR (Epic Sys.) and point of care testing could be helpful. Although continued work is required, our team is working on increase screening through adding HCV test to CBC-Panels in Emergency Department settings, phone calls to all birth cohort individuals through Robo-Calling System aimed to reach 75,000 individuals by 2019. However, a better linkage to care and referral monitoring system to all HCV RNA positive patients is still needed, and access to therapy, especially for uninsured patients, is challenging.

**Keywords :** chronic hepatitis C, chronic hepatitis C treatment, chronic hepatitis C screening, chronic hepatitis C prevention, liver cancer

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