Hep C Rising Among Young Non-Urban Injection Drug Users

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As prescription drug abuse leads more Americans on a path to heroin, new cases of hepatitis C virus (HCV) are rising among young people in non-urban areas east of the Mississippi, aidsmap reports. Publishing their findings in Clinical Infectious Diseases, researchers studied the impact of the hep C epidemic among people 30 or younger by analyzing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) surveillance reports covering 2006 to 2012. They also looked at sociodemographic and behavioral characteristics of young people diagnosed with new cases of hep C between 2011 and 2012; they culled the data from case interviews and provider follow-up information from six jurisdictions.

Between 2006 and 2012, there were 7,169 reported cases of hep C. Out of the 7,077 cases for which there was information about age, 44 percent were 30 years old or younger. This proportion was 36 percent in 2006 and rose to 49 percent by 2012.

The hep C incidence increased 13 percent annually among young people in non-urban counties, compared with 5 percent in urban counties. Thirty of 34 states (88 percent) reporting hep C cases saw a higher hep C incidence in 2012 than in 2006, especially in non-urban counties east of the Mississippi. Out of 1,202 newly infected young people in the 2011 to 2012 data, 52 percent were female and 85 percent were white.

There was data on interviews with 635 young people diagnosed with hep C between 2011 and 2012. Seventy-five percent of them reported injection drug use. Out of that group, 75 percent had previously abused prescription opioids an average of two years before using heroin.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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