How Can Hep C Treatment Be Used to Prevent Its Spread?

May 5, 2014

Now that the hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatments in the pipeline are approaching 100 percent efficacy, the prospect of significantly slowing the spread of the virus through treatment has become an exciting prospect, HIVandHepatitis reports. Various scientists presented research on the treatment-as-prevention (TasP) topic at the 49th annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) in London.

Targeting the right population with treatment is key to achieving effective TasP. However, the population most likely to spread the virus is not necessarily the same that most urgently needs treatment (those with advanced liver disease). And because the new hep C meds are so hugely expensive, cost may be a major deterrent to fighting the epidemic through TasP.

Because 60 percent of all hep C infections are in current or former injection drug users (IDUs) and 80 percent of new infections are in this group, targeting them with treatment would be more likely to prevent the spread of the virus.

One research team modeled how treatment could affect rates of hep C among French IDUs. They found that a multipronged approach—including increased screening for the virus, improved linkage to medical care, and earlier treatment with interferon-free drug regimens—could cut hep C prevalence in this population from 40 percent to 10 percent in just a decade.

To read the HIVandHepatitis story, click here.

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