As Hep C in Pregnant Women Rises, Infant Screening Remains Subpar

At one hospital in Pittsburgh, the rate of pregnant women with hepatitis C seen for delivery rose 60 percent in eight years.

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The opioid epidemic is driving up the rate of pregnant women who have hepatitis C virus (HCV), yet screening of newborns remains inadequate.

Publishing their findings in the journal Pediatrics, researchers studied data on pregnant women who delivered at a hospital in Pittsburgh between 2006 and 2014.

A total of 1.2 percent of the women seen for delivery had hep C. During the study period, the prevalence of HCV among women giving birth at the hospital increased by 60 percent.

Women seen for delivery who did and did not have hep C, respectively, fell into the following categories according to the following proportions: 67 percent and 53 percent were younger than 30; 93 percent and 72 percent were covered by Medicaid; and 68 percent and 1 percent had opioid use disorder.

Infants who were born to women who did and did not have hep C, respectively, fell into the following categories according to the following proportions: 22 percent and 10 percent were preterm (born before 37 weeks of gestation), and 23 percent and 8 percent were of low birth weight (less than 5.5 pounds).

Among 1,025 infants exposed to hep C during gestation for whom there were available pediatric records, 323 (31 percent) received well-child services; of that group, just 96 (30 percent) were tested for the virus.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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