Hep C Reinfection Risk Highest Among Recent Users of Injection Drugs

Using opioid medication treatment such as methadone appears to lower this risk.

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Among those cured of hepatitis C virus (HCV), the risk of reinfection is highest among people who have recently used injection drugs, Healio reports.

Publishing their findings in the Journal of Hepatology, researchers analyzed data from the British Columbia Hepatitis Testers Cohort, which included information on 1.7 million individuals screened for HCV in the Canadian province. The study authors identified 5,292 people who were cured of hep C between January 2014 and July 2017 and included in their analysis 4,114 of them who had at least one HCV viral load test after being pronounced cured.

Forty-four percent of the study cohort had a history of former injection drug use, while 21 percent had a history of recent injection drug use. Nineteen percent of these people who inject drugs (PWID) had been treated with opioid medication treatment (OMT).

During 2,767 cumulative years of follow-up, 40 members of the study cohort were reinfected with HCV, including 21 of the PWID. Only one of the PWID who was on OMT was reinfected.

The reinfection rate per 100 cumulative years of follow-up was: 10.2 cases among people who used injection drugs recently and were born after 1975; 5.7 cases among those who were coinfected with HIV; and 4.6 cases among those with problematic alcohol use.

Among those who recently used injection drugs, the risk of reinfection was greatest during the first 36 weeks after being cured of hep C.

After adjusting the data for various factors, the researchers found that compared with those without a history of injection drug use, people who injected drugs recently were 6.7 times more likely to be reinfected and those who formerly used injection drugs were 3.7 times more likely to be reinfected.

To read the Healio article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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