Hep C Screening Laws Are Effective

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State laws that mandate health care providers to offer hepatitis C virus (HCV) testing can help significantly increase screening rates and linkage to care among those newly diagnosed with the virus, according to new research published in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

The report used New York state as a case study for testing mandates, noting that in 2014, New York legislators enacted a law requiring that health care providers offer HCV antibody screening to all patients born between 1945 and 1965, one of the groups most at risk for an undiagnosed infection in the country.

Researchers then looked at survey data from clinical laboratories, state Medicaid claims and patient encounter data as well as years of New York's hep C surveillance statistics to see whether the new law had any effect on testing and linkage to care.

The researchers observed a 51 percent increase in blood specimens submitted for HCV testing during the first year of the law's implementation. Among Medicaid users, screening rates increased by 52 percent. Linkage to care among people with newly diagnosed hep C went up by about 40 percent in the state of New York and 11 percent in New York City—a significant increase.

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