Ohio Researchers Get $900K to Study Hepatitis C in Young Drug Users

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Two researchers at the University of Cincinnati were awarded $900,000 from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to study and combat the growing hepatitis C virus (HCV) epidemic among young injection drug users in Ohio, the Springfield News Sun reports.

Judith Feinberg, MD, a professor of internal medicine at the university and one of Hep's top experts on the hep C/heroin epidemics, will work with Erin Winstanley, PhD, an assistant professor of health outcomes, to help identify better hep C interventions for people ages 18 to 30 who inject drugs.

The project is known as Southern Ohio Prevents Hepatitis Project, or StOPHeP, and it will focus on 21 counties, primarily suburban and rural areas in the southern part of the state, where the region's heroin and prescription opioid epidemics are centered.

For the study, researchers and outreach workers will collaborate with local drug treatment programs, syringe exchanges and substance abuse education programs to better connect with drug users. They will also use social media and texting campaigns to recruit study subjects. Participants will be tested for both HCV and HIV, and those who are infected will be immediately referred to medical care.

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