Spread of Hep C Is on the Rise Among French Gay & Bi Men With HIV

This is occurring despite the fact that hepatitis C is increasingly being cured among the French HIV population.

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The widespread treatment of hepatitis C virus (HCV) in the French HIV population notwithstanding, HCV is transmitting among HIV-positive men who have sex with men (MSM) in the nation at an increasing rate.

Publishing their findings in the journal AIDS, researchers studied 2012 to 2016 annual hep C testing data on 40,714 people living with HIV in France. Hep C test results were available for 38,217 (94 percent) of these individuals. A total of 5,557 (15 percent) had hep C according to the first available test result. By the end of 2016, 82 percent of those individuals had been cured of the virus.

Among 21,519 individuals whose first HCV test was negative and who received subsequent tests (during a cumulative 63,449 years of follow-up), 219 of them tested positive for hep C, including 188 MSM and 31 non-MSM. Among the 3,406 individuals who were cured of a previous hep C infection, 73 reinfections occurred, including 51 among MSM and 22 among non-MSM, during a cumulative 10,602 years of follow-up.

Between 2012 and 2016, the annual rate of diagnosis of a first HCV infection among the study population rose from 5 to 9.2 diagnoses per 1,000 cumulative years of follow-up. During that period, the annual rate of diagnosis of a hep C reinfection remained generally stable, ranging between 25.2 and 29 diagnoses per 1,000 cumulative years of follow-up.

The study authors concluded that members of a subgroup of HIV-positive MSM are engaging in practices that put them at risk for reinfection with HCV following their first cure of that virus.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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