Tattoo Parties Fuel Hepatitis C Epidemic in Virginia

May 15, 2014

New infections of the hepatitis C virus (HCV) are exploding in the western part of Virginia, with many cases resulting from tattoo parties, WSLS reports. Hep C can be transmitted through tattooing and piercing if proper infection-control practices are not followed.

Authorities from the Virginia Department of Health report that at least 39 out of the 135 new hep C cases in 2012 were linked to unlicensed tattoo artists in Virginia's New River Valley region. Since 2004, nearly 10,000 HCV cases have been reported in the state.

Health officials say three New River Valley "hot spots" for new infections include Giles, Pulaski and Floyd counties. Risk factors in the area included IV drug use, tattoo parties and multiple sex partners.

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