# “Treatment as Prevention” to Fight Hep C

Using TasP to cure hepatitis C could help prevent new transmissions of the virus.

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Expanding hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment among Americans who inject drugs could significantly help to reduce new HCV infections in the United States—and could potentially eliminate the liver virus in at-risk populations in as little as 10 years, according to new research from Yale University published in The Lancet.

The strategy, known as “treatment as prevention,” or TasP, hypothesizes that curing hep C among at-risk individuals can, in the long run, help put a major dent in new transmissions of the virus. While TasP has proved highly effective in reducing the spread of HIV, few studies thus far have investigated its efficacy with regard to viral liver disease.

The researchers found that when hep C prevalence is higher than 85 percent in a population of people who inject drugs, treatment as prevention does not substantially reduce the spread of HCV.

However, when a group’s baseline prevalence was 60 percent or lower, researchers discovered that treating 12 percent or more of individuals in the group was, in fact, effective at preventing new transmissions, with the potential to eliminate the virus completely in the group within 10 years.

Researchers also noted that assigning treatment randomly throughout the population (rather than targeting just those with the greatest number of injection partners) was the most effective strategy at preventing new transmissions of hep C.

They concluded by stating that with sufficient expansion in treatment coverage among people who inject drugs, HCV treatment as prevention can, in fact, work. The study was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

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