U.K. Community Pharmacy Hep C Testing Program Is Cost Effective

Restricting the testing program to only people who inject drugs did not improve its cost effectiveness.

January 27, 2020 By Benjamin Ryan

A community pharmacy–based hepatitis C virus (HCV) testing program assessed in the United Kingdom proved cost effective.

Publishing their findings in the Journal of Viral Hepatology, researchers from the University of Southampton assessed a program in which 20 community pharmacies on the Isle of Wight in the United Kingdom provided hep C testing to anyone with a known risk factor for the virus. The program ran from September 2014 to September 2016.

Out of 186 HCV tests conducted, 13 were positive for HCV RNA, indicating a current infection. Six (46%) of those individuals received treatment for HCV during the study's follow-up period. All achieved a sustained virologic response 12 weeks after completing therapy, which is considered a cure.

The average age of those who tested positive for HCV was 38 years old; 53% were men. The most common risk factor was a history of injection drug use, reported by 37% of those who tested positive for the virus.

The overall cost of the intervention was $316,339. The cost to gain one quality-adjusted life year (QALY), which is a composite measurement of increased life expectancy and increased quality of life, was $4,819. If the testing program had been restricted just to people who inject drugs (PWID), this figure would have been $6,354. In the United Kingdom, if an intervention costs less than $26,123 per additional QALY gained, it is considered cost effective.

"The service was effective at identifying people with HCV infection, and despite the additional cost of targeted testing, its cost effectiveness was below the commonly accepted thresholds," the study authors concluded. "In this setting, restricting targeted testing to PWID would not improve the cost effectiveness."

To read the study abstract, click here.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/article/uk-community-pharmacy-hep-c-testing-program-cost-effective