New Viral Hepatitis Numbers from the CDC

This article originally appeared in the HCV Advocate, reviews the CDC's latest viral hepatitis statistics

June 29, 2015 By Alan Franciscus

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new estimates on the acute and chronic cases of hepatitis A, B and C:

Hepatitis A (HAV)
2013: *Estimated acute cases and deaths from hepatitis A*

- Acute: 3,500–range: 2,500 to 3,900
- Deaths: 80 (underlying contributing cause of death in most recent year available (2013))

Hepatitis B (HBV)
2013: *Estimated acute, chronic and deaths from hepatitis B*

- Acute: 19,800—range: 11,300 to 48,500
- Chronic: 700,000 to 1.4 million
- Deaths: 1,873

Hepatitis C (HCV)
2013: *Estimated acute, chronic and deaths from hepatitis C*

- Acute: 29,700—range: 23,500 to 101,400
- Chronic: 2.7 to 3.9 million
- Deaths: 19,368*

NOTE: Current information indicates these represent a fraction of deaths attributable in whole or in part to chronic hepatitis C.

Editorial Comments: The good news is that vaccination against hepatitis A and B and education

efforts are working to keep new infections, chronic infections and deaths consistent with previous years. Hepatitis A and B are in line with what have been previously reported and rates of new infections have leveled off. I personally believe that hepatitis B may be under reported especially in some larger populations of immigrants who may be infected with hepatitis B. Furthermore, we may not know the extent of chronic hepatitis B in the undocumented immigrant population.

HCV however, seems to be getting worse. The range of acute HCV in the population is much likely higher since we really don't have an effective surveillance system in our country. We have had large outbreaks of acute HCV in Wisconsin, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Indiana and elsewhere. I also believe the number of people with chronic hepatitis C is much higher and the deaths caused by hepatitis C is certainly higher. The CDC has an * (see note) that captures the deaths which are most likely under reported. Many times a death reported on a death certificate is listed as another cause when HCV or cirrhosis, liver cancer or a consequence of HCV may be listed instead.

On a sad note, the age group that had the highest rate of death was the 55 to 64 year old group with 51% of the total number of deaths—this is very young age for such a high death rate.

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