25 November 2015: Testing times

November 25, 2015 By David Pieper

This morning I attended the clinic appointment for my first post-treatment blood test.

The usual dozen or so vials of blood were extracted from my left arm and the blood samples sent off to a lab in Singapore for testing. It will be an anxious wait, as there is a lot riding on the results. Seven years ago my first post-treatment blood test came back positive for hep C.

In the afternoon I met up with a friend who has just tested positive for hep C. The yellow in his eyes is a dead giveaway that he has jaundice. When he told me that he has previously had hep A and is vaccinated against hep B, it is clear he must have hep C.

He is also HIV positive, just like me, and has acquired hepatitis C through sexual transmission, just like me, obviously quite recently. I am distressed to hear that the diagnosing Doctor at a sexual health clinic interrogated him about injecting drug use, despite my friend stating quite categorically that he has never injected drugs. The route of transmission should have no bearing on the response of a clinician to a new diagnosis.

It shocks me that sexual transmission of hep C should still be questioned by clinicians 13 years after the epidemic of sexually transmitted hep C among HIV positive gay men was clearly identified. That this should happen at a sexual health clinic patronised primarily by HIV positive gay men is a disgrace.

But I am saddened even more that public health campaigns have failed to warn HIV positive gay men, like my friend, that they are at risk of sexually transmitted hep C, or to provide appropriate advice on how to avoid it. It seems even those people in my own network have not heard the message.

How long will it take before a positive hep C test is not the first someone knows about the risk of sexually transmitted hepatitis C?

The opinions expressed above are mine alone and not necessarily those of my employer

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.