Call Addressing Barriers to Hepatitis Care Faced by Individuals Who Use Drugs Joins Community, Addresses Concerns

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The More than Tested, Cured project began this year as a partnership between the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR), the Atlanta Harm Reduction Coalition (AHRC), the People's Harm Reduction Alliance (PHRA) and the Urban Survivors Union (USU), to work together nationally to improve access to hepatitis C care faced by individuals who use drugs. On March 6, 2017, the community call was first public activity of the project and drew more than 100 participa nts.

The discussion focused on challenges that community organizations face in accessing hepatitis C prevention, care, and treatment services for people who use drugs. Common concerns included insurance coverage inequities, stigma among providers, and provider resistance to treat due to concerns about reinfection.

Regarding reinfection, Dr. Mojgan Zare of AHRC commented, "one of the points of this program is to decrease stigma to not put away the whole population because they might get reinfected. Some might, but also many, if plugged into services, won't get reinfected."

Some solutions to the challenges that were discussed included provider education programs (mostly intended to reduce stigma), patient education programs (that involve peer educators) and working with community partners to improve access to care for people who use drugs.

Mike Selick of Harm Reduction Coalition helps coordinate a peer-based program that involves each of the 15 syringe exchange programs in New York City. They were able to get the peers trained to navigate treatment denials and the program has been successful in getting the vast majority of people in the program screened for hepatitis C.

The More than Tested, Cured project is ongoing and will have more public webinars and conference calls throughout the year.

Learn more about this project and view full call notes here. Stay connected with NVHR by following us on Twitter and Facebook!

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