Hepatitis C Treatment in the Primary Care Setting: Increasing Access to Curative Therapies

Amber Slevin, PharmD, BCACP, CTTS
Clinical Pharmacist & Assistant Professor of Practice
Family HealthCare & North Dakota State University School of Pharmacy
Fargo, ND
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe basis for Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) management shift to primary care and other community clinics
- Outline a clinical model for providing primary care based HCV treatment
- Summarize HCV treatment barriers with a focus on issues specific to rural and underserved populations
- Outline resources to support providers treating HCV
DISCLOSURES

▪ I have no conflicts of interest to report, financial or otherwise.
HCV BACKGROUND

- HCV is a bloodborne pathogen that infects the liver.

![Diagram showing the progression of HCV infection and liver disease stages.](IMAGE SOURCE: Castera Transient Elastography Breakpoints, Hepatitis C Online, 2021.)

![Diagram showing the progression of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection and liver disease stages.](IMAGE SOURCE: Progression of Hepatitis C Virus, American College of Clinical Pharmacy (Gastrointestinal Disorders), 2016)
The most common cause of HCV transmission currently is sharing needles or other equipment associated with injection drug use.

Other transmission routes:
https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/hcvfaq.htm#b1
New Reports of Chronic Hepatitis C High in Multiple Generations

SOURCE: National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System, 2018
The millennial generation has passed the baby boomer generation in Hepatitis C case numbers.
Hepatitis C infections more than doubled in the past decade in North Dakota

Source: North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Sexually Transmitted & Bloodborne Diseases
HEPATITIS C COUNT AND RATE*, 2019

*Per 100,000 people. SOURCE: North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Sexually Transmitted & Bloodborne Diseases
New HCV screening recommendations in 2020

SOURCE: CDC Recommendations for Hepatitis C Screening, MMWR, April 2020
HCV TREATMENT: CALL FOR A SHIFT TO PRIMARY CARE

“To accomplish the goal of HCV eradication, we will need to markedly expand our pool of providers to PCP [primary care providers] and NPs. Data suggest that they can effectively treat most patients with HCV.”

Tram T Tran, MD

“New” Hepatitis C Direct Acting Antiviral (DAA) therapy is simple, safe/well tolerated, and highly effective.

**HCV TREATMENT:**
**CALL FOR A SHIFT TO PRIMARY CARE**

- Interferon (IFN) 1991
- Ribavirin (RBV) 1998
- Pegylated interferon (PEG-IFN) 2001
- DAAs 2011*

*Use of/need for ribavirin along with DAAs has significantly decreased since new DAAs approved in 2014.
HCV TREATMENT:
CALL FOR A SHIFT TO PRIMARY CARE

- Hepatitis C DAA highlights
  - >95% chance of Sustained Virologic Response 12 weeks after treatment (SVR12; cure)\(^7\)
  - Common side effects are manageable, severe risks are extremely rare
  - Specialist involvement only needed in complicated cases (severely advanced liver disease, co-infection with HBV or HIV, post-transplant)
Liver disease staging now simplified; biopsy not necessary
- Staging modality can be as simple as lab work which may require further diagnostic work (elastography/ultrasound)

Reduce risk of being lost to specialist referral follow-up, especially when patient have barriers (location, cost, etc)

HCV TREATMENT: CALL FOR A SHIFT TO PRIMARY CARE

- Increase in supportive resources available to general practitioners, including ECHO Model (Extension for the Community HealthCare Outcomes)
HCV TREATMENT: CALL FOR A SHIFT TO PRIMARY CARE

- Data indicates equitable treatment outcomes in primary/community-based settings as compared to specialist settings
  - Evidence for nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and pharmacist-run clinics\(^8,9,10\)
Transition
Pause

What questions do you have?
The HCV Team

▪ Kali Luecke, PA
▪ Kayla Nelson, NP
▪ Amber Slevin, PharmD
▪ NDSU Pharmacy Intern

Partnerships with nursing and in house pharmacy team.

Established October 2018.
PRIMARY CARE HCV TREATMENT MODEL EXAMPLE: FHC

**Referral Sources**
- FHC Primary Care or Medication Assisted Therapy Providers
- Community Referrals (treatment centers, public health offices)
- Family and friends

**Establishing Care**
- Discuss treatment basics, clinical work up, and trajectory toward insurance coverage
- Vaccinations
- Liver staging
- Obtain history and outside records

**Continuity of Care**
- Continue clinic work up & vaccinations as needed
- Work toward insurance coverage requirements
- Ensure patient is ready to commit to medication consistency and follow-up
Prior Authorization (PA)
- Required by most insurance providers
- Best if criteria are known early on in the patients care
- Variations in preferred product, sobriety requirements, etc between insurance companies

Treatment Initiation
- In depth, pharmacy-delivered medication education (adherence, side effects, etc)
- Comprehensive medication reconciliation & drug-drug interaction review
- Coordinate follow-up

During Treatment
- Regular phone check in from pharmacy intern (or other care coordinator)
- 1-2 provider visits (some practices do not require); flexible
- Coordination of SVR12 follow-up
After Treatment

- Document treatment end date & final adherence assessment based on start date
- Education on re-infection prevention/harm reduction
- Ensure HCV RNA is undetectable 12 weeks after treatment completion (SVR12); document cure or pursue re-treatment

After SVR12

- No further follow-up or screening required for HCV unless ongoing reinfection risk factors (ie IVDU, screen annually with HCV RNA quant lab)
- Ensure those with advanced liver disease are connected with appropriate care
FAMILY HEALTHCARE HCV CLINIC OUTCOMES*

- Approximately 150 patients seen in HCV clinic
- 45 patients who have successfully completed treatment
- 6 patients currently on HCV treatment
- 30 patients with SVR12 (cure) confirmation
- 15 patients awaiting due date of SVR12 labs
- 1 patient lost to follow-up on treatment

*Outcomes as of May 2021
FAMILY HEALTHCARE OUTCOMES: BARRIERS

Why have 150 patients been seen but only 50 started on treatment? Our barriers:

- Insurance PA requirements
- Clinical work-up time frame?

- “No shows”
- Contact info changes

- Post-corrections
- Treatment facility residents
- Homeless

- Misconceptions?
- Provider change?
- Comorbidities?

Pretreatment Process

Transient Population

Lost to Follow-up

Unknown
GENERAL BARRIERS

- Expense of HCV medications (DAAs)
  - Approximately $15,000 per month (ie at least $30,000 per treatment course)

- Insurance Criteria/Paperwork
  - Can be burdensome to find, fulfill, and document all criteria, especially if criteria is not publicly available
GENERAL BARRIERS

- Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Comorbidities
  - Insurance restrictions (improving)
    - Need to move toward “treatment as prevention”
  - Connection to resources for SUD/reinfection risk (harm reduction, treatment programs)

- Access to HCV care
  - Previously specialist treated disease state (ND Medicaid and many other payers have dropped specialist prescriber agreement)
  - Socioeconomic and rural disparities
  - No known HCV treating providers west of Minot & Mandan
INTERESTED IN PROVIDING PRIMARY CARE-BASED HCV TREATMENT?

Essential Roles

- Provider prescriber(s)
  - Evidence for nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and pharmacist-run clinics
- Care coordination (nurse, social worker, pharmacist)
- Pharmacy partnership (internal, external, or both)
  - “Go to” specialty pharmacy or local pharmacy depending on dominant payer mix and institution
INTERESTED IN PROVIDING PRIMARY CARE-BASED HCV TREATMENT?

Helpful Clinical Resources

▪ Clinical guidelines

▪ General educational resource
  ▪ Hepatitis C Online: https://www.hepatitisc.uw.edu/

▪ Drug-drug interaction site
  ▪ Liverpool® HEP Drug Interaction Checker: https://www.hep-druginteractions.org/checker
INTERESTED IN PROVIDING PRIMARY CARE-BASED HCV TREATMENT?

ND Medicaid HCV Treatment Coverage Criteria & Forms

- Forms: http://www.hidesigns.com/ndmedicaid/pa-forms.html
- Note: criteria updated July 1, 2021 to significantly reduce sobriety/lab requirements for patients that:
  - 1) do not have a history of SUD
  - 2) have a history of a SUD but it is either remote or the patient is/has recently been in SUD treatment
INTERESTED IN PROVIDING PRIMARY CARE-BASED HCV TREATMENT?

“Human” Resources

- Project ECHO: https://www.hennepinhealthcare.org/project-echo/
- North Dakota Dept of Health: HIV/STI/Viral Hepatitis Department
  - Contact information at end of slide deck
- Other HCV treatment teams
  - Family HealthCare: amber.slevin@ndsu.edu
SUMMARY

▪ There is much work to be done across the HCV Care Cascade (diagnosis to cure; care cascade) to eradicate HCV at population level

▪ Primary care-based HCV treatment can help overcome access barriers
REFERENCES


CONTACT INFORMATION

Amber Slevin, PharmD, BCACP, CTTS
Clinical Pharmacist & Assistant Professor of Practice
Family HealthCare & North Dakota State University School of Pharmacy
Fargo, ND
Phone: 701-271-6363
Email: amber.slevin@ndsu.edu