

THE AAOHN COMMUNITY CARES ABOUT HEPATITIS C

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Hepatitis C Best Practices: Instituting HCV Screening in a Healthcare Setting Nicholas Wade, RN, BSN, MPH, CEAS

In January 2016, I became the Head of Occupational Health Department at a Hospital in the Coachella Valley, a general medical and surgical hospital with 382 beds. In 2015, 72,981 patients visited the hospital's emergency room; the hospital had a total of 18,705 admissions. Its physicians performed 5,246 inpatient and 2,477 outpatient surgeries. Palm Springs has one of the highest concentrations of same-sex couples of any community in the United States, with 107.28 couples per 1000 residents per the U.S. Census American Community Survey in 2010 (Gates & Cooke, 2011, p.6). In the city, 7.2% of households belong to a same-sex couple as compared to the national average of 1% (Lofquist, 2011). It's estimated that 70% of same sex couples are HIV positive in the Palm Springs community (Desert AIDS Project, n.d.).

Because many of our employees live in Palm Springs, I implemented baseline Hepatitis C (HCV) antibody testing (with reflex HCV RNA testing) at this hospital at time of preplacement evaluation. In 2016, 446 new hires were on boarded and 4 tested positive for Hepatitis C antibody (with confirmatory HCV RNA PCR testing (viral counts). Additionally, we have approximately 50-60 needle-stick or mucous membrane potential blood borne pathogen exposures to employees per year, with 20% of source patients testing positive for Hepatitis C.

I presented the HCV screening proposal to my Supervisor who is the VP of Human Resources. The cost of HCV testing is \$17.09 per employee. Employees are educated and counseled that this is voluntary HCV testing, and that all results are kept confidential. The majority of new hires consented to having Hepatitis C screening. I review all HCV testing results with new hires who tested positive for chronic HCV infection, and I provided counsel regarding need for follow-up. Our health insurance covers HCV treatment with the direct acting antiviral medications, and these employees were referred to their primary care provider for treatment. Additionally I advise them of the Hepatitis C Center of Excellence which is based in Palm Springs. I educate all employees as to how curable Hepatitis C is now and provide resources from HepCHope.com.

Mr. Wade is a member of the AAOHN HCV Work Group.

References:

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Lofquist, D. (September 2011). Same-Sex Couple Households. American Community Survey Issue Brief. Washington D.C. U.S. Census. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acsbr10-03.pdf>