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### Safe injection to prevent infection: Specific injection practices are associated with Hepatitis C exposure, suggesting opportunities for targeted harm reduction intervention for people who inject drugs in Maine

N P. Sankar

*Maine Medical Center*

K Murray

*Maine Medical Center*

D Burris

*Maine Medical Center*

K Thakarar

*Maine Medical Center*

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# Safe injection to prevent infection:

Specific injection practices are associated with Hepatitis C exposure, suggesting opportunities for targeted harm reduction intervention for people who inject drugs in Maine

Sankar NP<sup>1,3</sup>, Murray K<sup>2</sup>, Burris D<sup>1,2</sup>, Thakrar K<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Maine Medical Center, Portland, ME 04102; <sup>2</sup>Maine Medical Center Research Institute, Scarborough, ME 04704; <sup>3</sup>University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine, Biddeford, ME 04005

## Background

- The U.S. opioid epidemic has contributed to an increase in infections related to IDU, such as HCV
- Transmission of HCV has been linked to unsafe injection practices
- This study aims to characterize risk factors associated with HCV exposure amongst people who inject drugs in Maine

## Methods

- Data were obtained through a survey and electronic health records from n=101 participants hospitalized at 4 hospitals in Maine with IDU-associated infections
- HCV exposure was defined as HCV antibody positive and/or self-reported exposure
- The Bacterial Infections Risk Scale for Injectors (BIRSI-7) score was used to assess safety of injection practices
- Descriptive analyses and univariate regression modeling were used to analyze data

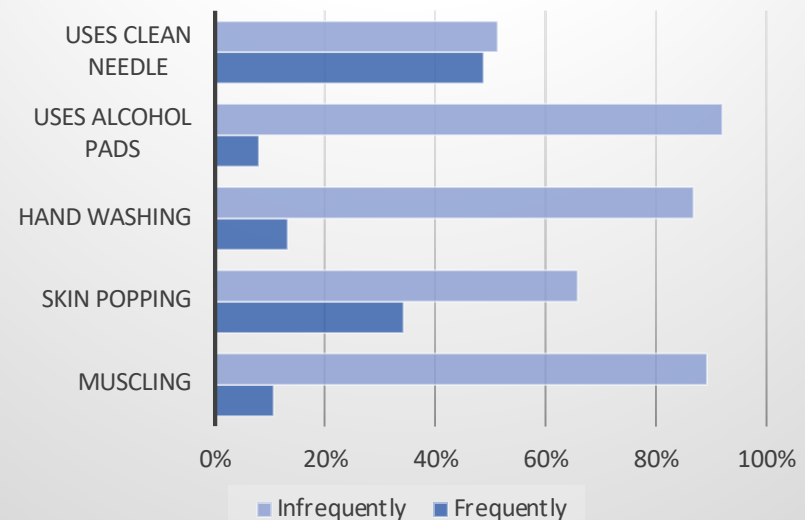
## Results

- n=76 (75%) participants had HCV exposure
- Of patients exposed to HCV, 54% reported homelessness ( $p<0.01$ )
- **92% and 87%** of HCV-exposed participants reported **infrequent use of alcohol pads** prior to injecting ( $p<.01$ ) and **infrequent hand-washing** ( $p=.06$ ), respectively
- A higher BIRSI-7 score was associated with higher odds of HCV exposure (OR=1.48, 95% CI 1.10-2.04)

## Discussion

- **Lack of alcohol pad use and infrequent hand washing** were related to HCV exposure
- **Harm reduction intervention services** that target specific injection practices could be beneficial in screening and prevention of HCV exposure amongst people who inject drugs

## High Risk Injection Practices in HCV Exposure



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Contact Information:  
Email: [nsankar@une.edu](mailto:nsankar@une.edu)