2021

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

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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

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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

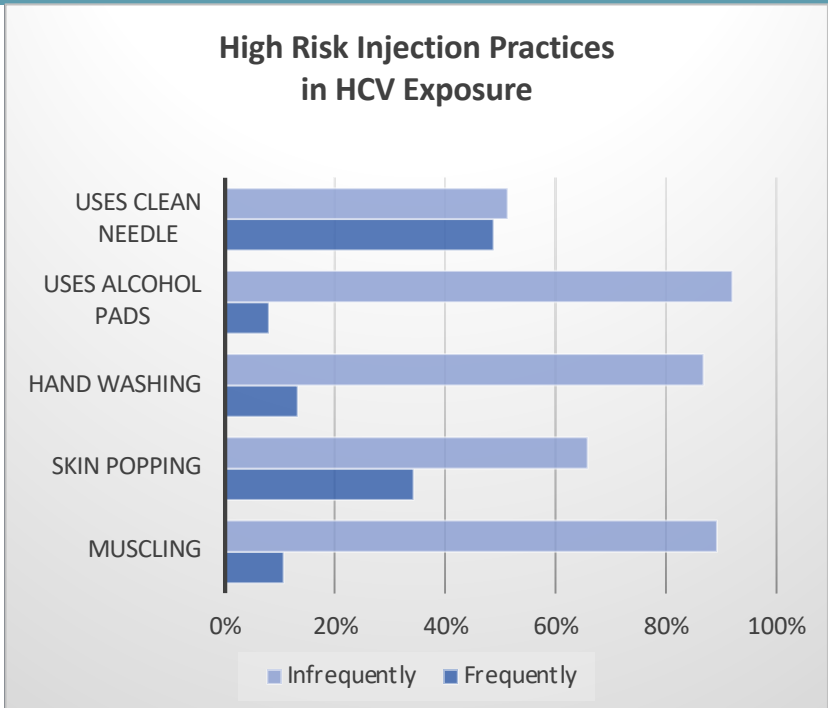
- Data were obtained through a survey and electronic health records from n=101 participants hospitalized at 4 hospitals in Maine with IDU-associated infections
- HCV exposure was defined as HCV antibody positive and/or self-reported exposure
- The Bacterial Infections Risk Scale for Injectors (BIRSI-7) 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



The research reported here was supported by grant U54 GM115516 from the National Institutes of Health for the Northern New England Clinical and Translational Research network.

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