

Accessible Care:

Curing Hepatitis C Virus in a Primary Care Setting

Delaware has one of the highest rates of Hepatitis C Virus in the nation.

Learn more!



WESTSIDE'S PROGRAM IMPACT



over
13,133

PATIENTS
SCREENED



87

PATIENTS
CURED



250+

STAFF MEMBERS
TRAINED

Note: Data reporting period January 2019 to March 2024.

About Hepatitis C Virus in Delaware

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) is the most common blood-borne infection in the United States and accounts for more deaths than 60 other infectious diseases combined, including HIV.

In fact, Delaware has one of the highest rates of Hepatitis C in the country because of the opioid epidemic. Nearly half of individuals who are infected are unaware of their HCV status. Unlike some other infectious diseases, Hepatitis C can be easily treated and cured in a primary care setting with highly-effective antiviral medicines, yet less than 10% of individuals infected with HCV have been treated and cured due to the lack of healthcare specialists available.

Less than 30% of patients diagnosed with HCV are treated with these effective medications within the first year, and patients with public insurance or patients of color are even less likely to be treated. Too many barriers to care still exist including diagnosis of HCV, link to care and access to medication. Treating the patient saves their life, prevents further spread of HCV, and saves costs by stopping further disease progression.

Screening & Treatment in a Primary Care Medical Home

Our universal Hepatitis C screening and treatment program was launched in 2018 in partnership with ChristianaCare. Early success led to quick expansion with grant funding from Direct Relief and the Pfizer Foundation in 2020.

Key components of our program include the following:

- Consistent training about Hepatitis C for all levels of the care team.
- Developed a strong infrastructure, including electronic health record (EHR) workflows, patient registries, and real-time tracking mechanisms.
- Universal screening of all patients over the age of 18 with an embedded tool in EHR.
- Comprehensive case management and treatment for patients including addressing the social determinants of health (SDOH).

Breaking Down Barriers to Treating Hepatitis C Virus

Westside aims to effectively dismantle barriers that obstruct the path to culturally competent medical services for underserved populations. We prioritize not only addressing immediate healthcare needs but also fostering long-term wellness and resilience among those who have long been sidelined by systemic inequities. We incorporate this model to patients receiving Hepatitis C treatment.

Effective tactics include:

- Incorporate telehealth visits that empower patients to be more engaged in their Hepatitis C treatment plans by reducing transportation barriers.
- Multiple touchpoints available to meet patients where they are including HCV Patient Navigators and Nurse Case Managers.
- Establish partnerships with pharmacies and health plans to streamline prior authorization processes.
- Utilize benefits of the 340B program to ensure antiviral medications are affordable and accessible for all patients, regardless of insurance status.
- In treating HCV and having a comprehensive case management approach, other co-morbidities such as mental illness, substance abuse, or unstable housing are also addressed.



Lessons Learned

Shifting the care of patients with HCV to a primary care medical home is a necessary step to help meet the WHO Global Health Sector Strategy on eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health problem. Since the advent of well-tolerated, highly effective antiviral therapy, more work needs to be done to increase access for this therapy to patients and populations who need the medicines the most.

Furthermore, additional training for medical providers is needed to increase access for HCV treatment in primary care. Cultivating culturally competent care fosters trust and rapport between providers and patients, facilitating open communication and mitigating stigma associated with HCV. Additionally, advocating for policy reforms to increase access to affordable medications and diagnostic testing is paramount in ensuring equitable treatment opportunities for all patients, regardless of socioeconomic status. By embracing these lessons, FQHCs can continue to make significant strides in combating HCV and advancing health equity within their communities.

“There aren't many things that we can say we cure in primary care. But, now we are able to treat and cure patients with Hepatitis C. This is a game changer.”

Karla Testa, MD
Director of Pediatrics and Special Populations

About Westside Family Healthcare

Westside Family Healthcare (Westside) is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), with the mission to improve the health of our communities by providing equal access to quality healthcare, regardless of ability to pay. With five health center locations and one mobile health unit, we are caring for more than 26,000 patients across Delaware.

Data References:

- <https://hepvu.org/local-data/delaware/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2021surveillance/hepatitis-c/figure-3.3.htm>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2021surveillance/hepatitis-c/table-3.5.htm>

