Preventing Acute Rises in Hepatitis B within the Opioid Epidemic: Policy and Primary Care Based Opportunities to Increase Adult Hepatitis B Vaccination in the United States

Rita K. Kuwahara, MD MH1,2, Jeffrey Caballero, MPH2, Asha Marhatta, MD MPH1
Connecticut Institute for Communities, Inc.1 and the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations2

Introduction

- Chronic Hepatitis B Virus Infection in the United States:
  - Up to 2.2 million people living with chronic hepatitis B in the U.S.
  - 2/3 of individuals with chronic hepatitis B are unaware of their infection in the U.S.
  - 1 in 4 individuals with unmanaged chronic hepatitis B develop liver cancer, liver failure and/or cirrhosis
  - Individuals with chronic hepatitis B can develop liver cancer without cirrhosis
  - Universal childhood hepatitis B vaccination in the U.S. began in the mid-1990s and became the first anti-cancer vaccine to be administered

- Only 25% of adults in the U.S. are vaccinated against hepatitis B

Purpose

- To determine primary care physicians’ awareness of current adult hepatitis B (HBV) vaccination rates in the U.S.
- To identify opportunities to increase adult HBV testing and vaccination within the primary care setting.

Methods

- Primary Care Internal Medicine residents and faculty at a Connecticut Community Health Center:
  - Completed a survey of their adult HBV testing & vaccination practices.
  - Attended a session on current HBV testing & vaccination guidelines.
  - Completed a post-test survey to determine their anticipated practice changes to address adult HBV testing and vaccination.
- Engaged in advocacy to raise awareness of adult HBV vaccination.

Results

Perceptions of Adult Hepatitis B Vaccination Rates:

- 0% Realized that the adult HBV vaccination rate is only 25%
- 86% Incorrectly believed that the adult HBV vaccination rate is 75%
- 29% did not know anyone requesting HBV vaccination should be vaccinated against HBV according to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)
- 14% were unaware that chronic HBV can cause liver cancer without cirrhosis

Vaccine All Adults at Risk for Hepatitis B
AND
All Adults who Request Vaccination

Patients with HBV Risk Factors

- 86% Cared for at least 10-19 patients with at least 1 HBV risk factor in the past month
- 43% Cared for over 20 patients with an least 1 HBV risk factor in the past month, yet...

Pre-Intervention HBV Testing and Vaccination Practices

- Never considered testing their patients for HBV in the past 1 month: 43%
- Never considered vaccinating their patients against HBV in the past 1 month: 29%
- Reported ordering HBV vaccinations for less than 5 of their patients in the past 1 month: 71%

Post-HBV Clinical Guidelines Update

Reported Practice Changes Post-HBV Clinical Guidelines Update (%)

- Much more likely to consider testing.
- At least a little more likely to consider vaccinating.
- Less likely to consider/ order HBV testing/vaccination

HBV Adult Vaccination Guidelines:

Advocacy Phase

- Employed advocacy techniques and coalition building strategies to raise awareness of the need to increase adult hepatitis B vaccination rates in the setting of the opioid epidemic
- Collaborated with Members of Congress to introduce a Resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate to Designate April 30 as National Adult Hepatitis B Vaccination Awareness Day

Conclusions and Next Steps

- There are significant opportunities to increase adult hepatitis B testing and vaccination in the primary care setting:
  - Routinely speak with patients regarding hepatitis B testing and vaccination.
  - Implement protocols to identify patients requiring hepatitis B testing/vaccination, including integration into diabetes checklists, standing orders, etc.
- To prevent outbreaks of acute hepatitis B within the opioid epidemic, it is vital to raise awareness of adult hepatitis B testing and vaccination among clinicians at all levels of training, as well as in the community.

Study Limitations:

- Single center study site with small sample size
- Lack of local and national comprehensive hepatitis B surveillance data

Next Steps Include:

- Improving access to hepatitis B testing and vaccination by stocking the 2- and 3-dose hepatitis B vaccines in clinics and enabling individuals to access hepatitis B testing and vaccination in non-clinic settings.
- Developing systems to appropriately link those with chronic hepatitis B into care for ongoing management/hepaticellular carcinoma surveillance.
- Strengthening local, state and national hepatitis B surveillance systems.
- Building coalitions with national partners, Members of Congress and government agencies to develop a national adult hepatitis B vaccination and testing awareness campaign, particularly within the opioid epidemic.

References and Disclosures

Contact: KuwaharaR@ct-institute.org

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