

Massachusetts Hepatitis C Programs

A collaborative effort of the
MDPH Hepatitis C Program and
HIV/AIDS Bureau

Concept

- Hepatitis C care, evaluation and treatment require additional resources that are not available in most traditional medical practices
- By utilizing the comprehensive medical management model used in HIV programs, patients will have the support they need to better manage their HCV

Worcester, MA

- High rates of heroin/intravenous drug use
- For Worcester residents who accessed substance abuse treatment services in FY '04,
 - 57% reported heroin as their drug of choice
 - 48% reported injecting drugs
- IVDU has historically been the major cause of HIV transmission in the area

Fitchburg, MA

- Located about 45 minutes north of Worcester
- Resource-poor community
- Community health center is the principal provider of health care for the underserved
- High rates of poverty and substance use
- Large percentage of Spanish-speakers

Opportunities

- Very limited resources for HCV evaluation, care and treatment in the Fitchburg area.
- An established relationship with the Fitchburg community health center
- A large number of potential patients who need and want HCV care
- Staff who were already trained in HCV and able to begin seeing patients immediately

UMass Resources

- Trained providers with an interest in HCV treatment and experience working with the target population
- Great support from the staff at the State's Hep C Program and HIV/AIDS Bureau
- Good organizational reputation
- An existing model of HIV care that was easily duplicated for HCV

Grant Funding

- Grant funds (\$108,000 annually from MDPH Hepatitis C Program) primarily cover salaries for both sites:
 - MD: four sessions per month
 - NP: .20 FTE
 - LPN: .60 FTE
 - Case Manager: .40 FTE
 - RN at Fitchburg CHC: .10 FTE

Model

Fitchburg:

- UMass established the program at the Fitchburg CHC. Health center management recognized the need for this service and does not charge UMass a fee for use of their facility.
 - Fitchburg CHC retains all billing for the NP
 - All billing for the MD is paid to UMass
 - UMass funds 4 hours per week for a health center nurse to help cover the time UMass staff are not on site

Model (con't)

Worcester:

- UMass Memorial has provided client-centered HIV Programs for 20 years
- Has experience working with the target population
- A large clinical area and extensive patient population to draw from
- Bi-lingual/bi-cultural staff and on-site interpreter services

Staffing

- Utilized two providers (one MD and one NP) who were already treating co-infected patients for both HIV and HCV
- Both providers had done limited treatment for HCV mono-infection
- All program staff split their time between the HIV and HCV Programs

Challenges

- In Fitchburg, UMass's reputation as a "big city provider" was viewed as threatening to some providers
- We were initially viewed as "outsiders"--significant energy to build a trusting relationship with Fitchburg health center primary care providers
- Patients referred to the Fitchburg Program tend to have a high degree of co-morbidities, advanced liver disease, and significant social issues that impact care and treatment
- In Worcester, more competition for HCV patients, including UMass's own Gastroenterology Department

Timeline

- August, 2007: Meeting with MDPH HIV/AIDS Bureau and Hepatitis C Program
- October, 2007: site visit to IDCS in Hyannis to observe their HCV program
- Nov.1, 2007: Fitchburg Program opened
- Feb.1, 2008: Worcester Program opened

Worcester: Medical Management

One LPN (bilingual) dedicates 3 days per week for HCV.
Her duties include:

- Initial intake; medical, social, psychiatric history
- Initial medication teaching
- Insurance enrollment and navigation
- Follow-up/monitor labs
- Give weekly injections, if needed
- Weekly follow up phone calls when on treatment; help manage medication side effects and adherence
- Obtain prior authorizations for medications
- Schedule and follow up on psychiatric, eye exam, and liver biopsy appointments

Fitchburg: Medical Management

Staffed 2 days per week by a non-medical person (bi-lingual) with extensive HIV experience. The case manager (under the direction of the Nurse Practitioner and Physician) provides the following services:

- Initial Intake
- Disease management education
- Assessment of need (transportation, pharmacy, health insurance)
- Coordinate internal and external referrals
- Remind patients of their appointments; contact when appointments are missed
- Maintain an up-to-date patient list
- Maintain program documentation for DPH
- Verbal and written medical translation (Spanish) to patients
- Assist NP in the HCV clinic (charts, room available, etc)

Services for Patients Who are not on Treatment

- Vaccinations for HAV, HBV,
- Referral to GI clinic for EGD (upper endoscopy),
- Referral for liver transplant
- Disease education and counseling (avoiding alcohol, diet, etc)
- Referrals for mental health and/or substance abuse treatment
- Continue monitoring labs (viral load, liver biopsy) for disease progression

Program Successes

As of June 30, 2008:

Fitchburg: enrolled 56 patients.

Of that number:

- 3 have started treatment (one eventually discontinued)
- Another 4 are treatment ready.
- So far, 25 patients have had some kind of medical evaluation (e.g. ultrasound, biopsy) to move them toward treatment.

Program Successes (cont'd)

Worcester: enrolled 15 patients.

Of that number:

- 6 have started treatment. **None of the patients who started treatment has discontinued or dropped out of therapy.**
- Another 4 are treatment ready.
- So far, 10 patients have had some kind of medical evaluation (e.g. ultrasound, biopsy) to move them toward treatment.