

Hepatitis C Virus in Women of Childbearing Age, Pregnant Women, and Children

Background

- To address the rising public health concern of HCV infection and mother-to-infant transmission, the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and the Infectious Diseases Society of America recommend universal HCV testing during pregnancy.¹
- Recommendations are based on healthcare providers identifying and reporting at-risk women. Use of data from large commercial laboratories can verify or improve the accuracy of such an approach.
- Objective:** The investigators sought to extend the national dataset of HCV infection and testing among women of childbearing age, pregnant women, and children²; thus, they examined data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) from 2015 and data from 2 large commercial laboratories (2011- 2016).

Methods

- Birth certificate data from the NCHS of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) were examined for maternal HCV infection status and demographic information.
- Quest Diagnostics and Laboratory Corporation of America provided HCV testing data to the CDC. The provided data included demographic information and basic clinical information (eg, pregnancy status at the time of HCV testing).
 - Detection, testing, and HCV positivity (proportion positive among those who are tested) rates were determined for women of childbearing age, pregnant women, and children <5 years of age.

Results

- NCHS data showed that HCV-infected women accounted for 0.38% of all live births in 2015 (14,417 of 3,823,723).
- Compared to the overall population of women with live births in 2015, women who were young (20-29 y of age), white, living in rural areas, or using Medicaid were more likely to be HCV-infected.
- Commercial laboratory data indicated a similar rate of HCV infection among women with live births: 0.26% overall.
- Based on laboratory data from 2011 to 2016, HCV testing and positivity rates increased.
 - Women of childbearing age: testing increased from 6.1% to 8.4%; positivity increased from 4.4% to 6.0%.
 - Pregnant women: testing increased from 5.7% to 13.4%; positivity increased from 2.6% to 3.6%.
 - Children (<5 y of age): testing increased from 0.47% to 0.59%; positivity increased from 3.6% to 4.0%.

Conclusions

- In the United States, HCV infection rates increased during the study period among women of childbearing age, pregnant women, and children.
- Testing for HCV has increased as well, which may help to identify women and children vulnerable to HCV chronic disease and allow proactive reduction of the disease burden.

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Authors

Sarah F Schillie,¹ Lauren Canary,¹ Alaya Koneru,¹ Noele P Nelson,¹ Wade Tanico,² Harvey W Kaufman,³ Susan Hariri,¹ Claudia J Vellozi¹

Affiliations

¹ Division of Viral Hepatitis, National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA

² Laboratory Corporation of America, Burlington, NC

³ Quest Diagnostics, Madison, NJ

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