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The Tennessee Department of Health's Community Based Organization Hepatitis C Virus Testing Pilot

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BACKGROUND

In response to an increase in acute Hepatitis C (HCV) case rates in Appalachia, primarily among young, white, non-urban dwelling individuals, the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) partnered with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Eastern TN to develop a community-based HCV Testing Program among at-risk individuals.

OBJECTIVES

TDH sought to partner with CBOs serving individuals at high-risk of acquiring HCV, and who were willing to provide clients with HCV counseling and rapid testing.

METHODS

We identified seven CBOs in TN who: 1) served populations at-risk of acquiring HCV, 2) were interested in providing HCV testing and counseling, and 3) were willing to submit required monthly testing reports in exchange for receiving free rapid HCV test kits. Participating CBOs provided HCV antibody testing using OraSure HCV rapid test kits.

RESULTS

From January 1 to May 31, 2016, seven CBOs conducted 1,101 rapid HCV tests throughout TN. Of individuals tested, 56% were male; 84% white; and the top self-reported patient risk factors included history of injection drug use (49%), history of tattoos or body piercing (24%), and history of intranasal drug use (22%). Of individuals tested, 432 (33%) tested HCV-antibody positive.

CONCLUSION

The results of the HCV Testing Program demonstrate the feasibility of implementing a CBO-based HCV rapid testing program, as well as the need for targeted HCV counseling and testing in non-healthcare settings, as evidenced by high HCV positivity rates.