

Acceptability and implications of rapid HCV testing among high risk young injection drug users

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Background

- It is estimated that 50% to 70% of those infected with HCV in the U.S. have not been tested.
- People who inject drugs are at highest risk of infection, yet have limited access to HCV testing.
- Newly available, FDA approved, and accurate rapid point-of-care anti-HCV testing, in community-based settings can accelerate the identification of HCV infections and introduce risk reduction education in this high risk group.
- We administered a short survey to young active injection drug users (IDU) participating in an ongoing prospective study to evaluate the views toward and acceptability of HCV rapid testing.

Methods

- Beginning in June 2012 we invited 69 young adult active IDU to complete a brief survey in San Francisco, CA
 - <30 years
 - Injected once in the last 30 days at baseline
- Two tests were offered to participants: *rapid* (OraSure Technologies: Bethlehem, PA) and *standard* anti-HCV tests (Procleix® HIV-1/HCV assay, Novartis, Emeryville, CA), allowing participants to choose between the two
- We administered a short questionnaire assessing the participant's perception of its accuracy, their preferred testing procedures, and reasons for said preferences
- Additionally, blood samples were collected to ascertain HCV viremia status in all participants
- All participants received pre- and post-test risk reduction counseling
- Study procedures were informed by the needs of the young adult injector community, implemented by our client-centered and culturally competent research staff



Rapid anti-HCV Test Procedures

- Trained research staff obtained informed consent and, explained the differences between *rapid* and *standard* anti-HCV tests
- Upon consent certified phlebotomist collected blood sample using OraQuick HCV rapid test kit via fingerstick
- Test device requires 20 minute wait-time during which research staff would discuss risk behaviors and expected test results before disclosure

UFO Study Sample Characteristics, June 2012 to October 2012

Characteristics	Overall N	%	HCV Rapid Test Takers N (%)	HCV Standard Test Takers N (%)
	69		52 (75.4)	17 (24.6)
Age				
≤ 25 years	35	50.7	27 (77.1)	8 (22.9)
> 25 years	34	49.3	25 (73.5)	9 (26.5)
Gender				
Male	51	73.9	39 (76.5)	12 (23.5)
Female	18	26.1	13 (76.5)	5 (23.5)
Ethnicity				
Non-white	29	42	25 (86.2)	4 (13.8)
White	40	58	27 (67.5)	13 (32.5)
Completed High School				
Yes	50	72.5	38 (76)	12 (24)
No	19	27.5	14 (73.7)	5 (26.3)
Homeless, last 3 months				
Yes	19	27.5	18 (94.7)	1 (5.3)
No	50	72.5	34 (68)	16 (32)
Anti-HCV Results				
Negative	66	95.7	50 (75.8)	16 (24.2)
Positive	3	4.3	2 (66.7)	1 (33.3)

Results

Perceptions of anti-HCV Rapid Test Among Young IDU (N = 69)

- 62 % *believe* the HCV rapid Test to be just as or more accurate than the standard HCV test
- Of those who *believe* the rapid test to be just as or more accurate than the standard, most (39%) do so because both procedures require blood
- Of those who *believe* HCV rapid Test to be less accurate, most do so because the test is 'too fast', or 'too new'

Acceptability of anti-HCV Rapid Test Among Young IDU (n = 54)

Variable	N	%
	38	
Main reason for choosing rapid test:		
Wanted fast results	24	63.2
Rapid test is more convenient	4	10.5
'I have bad veins'	1	2.6
Rapid test is less painful	1	2.6
Rapid test requires less blood	4	10.5
Rapid test is less stressful	2	5.3
'I trust the research staff experience'	1	2.6
'I was concerned I wouldn't get paid'	1	2.6
Compared to Standard blood draw, getting a fingerstick was:		
Much more painful	1	2.3
More painful	2	4.6
About the same amount of pain	11	25.0
Less painful	14	31.8
Much less painful	16	36.4
"I found the fingerstick uncomfortable"		
Strongly agree	2	4.6
Agree	11	25
Disagree	18	40.9
Strongly disagree	13	29.6

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Highlights

- 97% of participants reported understanding the rapid testing procedure and their results
- 95% of participants would recommend the rapid test to a friend
- 78 % of those who chose HCV rapid test prefer it over HCV Standard

Lessons Learned

- Most young injectors opted for HCV rapid test and an overwhelming majority would recommend the procedure to a friend
- Knowing one's HCV status matters: of those who chose the HCV rapid test, many stated they wanted fast results in lieu of waiting for commercial lab results to return
- Fingersticks for blood collection as a favorable alternative to venipuncture: most participants found the fingerstick less painful and less invasive

Implications

- Increased awareness of one's HCV status will help prevent the spread of HCV
- Anti-HCV rapid tests can be implemented in high volume, with timely turn-around, at relatively low cost
- More research is needed to test feasibility and acceptability in a variety of settings and in diverse populations

