

Many with hepatitis C missing out on treatment, study finds

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Without proper care, infection can lead to liver failure.

(HealthDay)—Many hepatitis C patients get "lost" in the U.S. health care system, a new study suggests.

Researchers looked at data from about 13,600 people in Philadelphia who tested positive for hepatitis C virus between January 2010 and December 2013. During that time, just 27 percent of the patients were in care and 15 percent had been treated or were receiving treatment, the study authors found.

The study was recently published in the journal *Hepatology*.

"Our findings show that many [hepatitis C] patients are lost at each stage of the health care continuum from screening to disease confirmation to care and treatment," Kendra Viner, of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, said in a journal news release.

"The fact that so few patients with [hepatitis C virus] are making it to treatment underscores the need to build awareness among at-risk groups of the importance of screening and continued care," Viner said. "It is critical that [public health](#) officials and clinicians understand why patients are lost at each stage so that changes can be made to improve care."

About 3.2 million people in the United States are infected with hepatitis C, which can lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver failure. Up to 70 percent of people with acute hepatitis C infection have no symptoms and are unaware they are infected until years later when they develop serious liver damage, the researchers explained in the news release.

Those who are at greatest risk for hepatitis C infection—and should be screened—include [injection drug users](#), blood transfusion recipients, children born to mothers with chronic infection, and adults born between 1945 and 1965, according to the news release.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases has more about [hepatitis C](#).

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