

High prevalence of HCV in baby boomers presenting to ER

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Electron micrograph of hepatitis virus. Source: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(HealthDay)—The prevalence of unrecognized chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) is high among baby boomers presenting to the emergency department, according to a study published online Jan. 28 in *Hepatology*.

James W. Galbraith, M.D., from the University of Alabama School of Medicine in Birmingham, and colleagues describe an early experience with integrated opt-out HCV antibody (Ab) screening of medically stable baby boomers presenting to an urban academic [emergency department](#). The researchers examined the prevalence of unrecognized HCV infection.

The researchers found that 12.7 percent of the 2,325 HCV-unaware

baby boomers opted out of HCV screening. HCV Ab tests were performed on 1,529 individuals, 170 (11.1 percent) of whom were reactive. Follow-up polymerase chain reaction was performed on 150 patients, of whom 68 percent were confirmed RNA-positive. The likelihood of HCV was higher for males versus females (14.7 versus 7.4 percent), for African-Americans versus whites (13.3 versus 8.8 percent), and for under/uninsured versus insured patients (16.8/16.9 versus 5 percent). Fifty-four percent of RNA-positive [patients](#) were successfully contacted by phone within five attempts. Initial follow-up appointments were confirmed for 70.3 percent of RNA-positive individuals who had been successfully contacted.

"We observed high prevalence of unrecognized chronic HCV infection in this series of [baby boomers](#) presenting to the emergency department, highlighting the emergency department as an important venue for high-impact HCV screening and linkage to care," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract](#)
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