Connecting the dots: Filling in the gaps in barriers to care for PWID

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People who inject drugs under-utilize the healthcare system

- People who inject drugs (PWID) have important health needs and benefit from regular healthcare access
- PWID have limited healthcare utilization outside of emergency services
- Stigma plays a major role in limiting healthcare access for PWID

Artenie, et al, JVH, 2015; Vivolo-Kantor, et al, MMWR, 2018
Stigma prevents access to healthcare

- Healthcare providers and staff may view PWID negatively, mistrusting their motives, and fearing deception
  - Medical staff may view PWID as ‘reckless’ and uncaring about their health, even when PWID present seeking help and care
- Experiences with stigma can lead PWID to delay or avoid seeking healthcare

When stigma prevents access to healthcare

Of 3,795 PWID studied in 10 urban cities in the United States in 2018:

- 44% reported visiting any kind of healthcare provider in the past year
- 46% report ever getting testing for hepatitis C
- 45% report testing for HIV in the past year
- 54% report an overdose in the past year
- 64% tested positive for hepatitis C infection

Data from 2018 National HIV Behavioral Survey
Barriers to care exist at the system, provider and patient level

Source: PCORI Hero Study Protocol
Other barriers to linkage to care

- Waiting lists
- Lack of evidence-based programs
- Lack of providers/inadequate workforce
- Geographic distance
- Cost
- Fear of child protective services involvement
- Childcare needs

- Pregnancy – lack of specific programs/programs that will take pregnant women
- Lack of provider trainings and lack of tools to deal with intervention outcomes
- Lack of reimbursement for providers
- Lack of adolescent-focused treatment
Offering the minimal standard of care limits access

Of 597 PWID who tested positive for HCV, less than one percent were cured of their HCV infection

Patient navigation services improve outcomes for PWID

Coyle, et al, MMWR, 2015
A model of prevention, intervention and care for PWID

- **Continued Engagement**
  - Reinfection prevention
  - Case management
  - Harm reduction services
  - Supportive housing
  - Relapse prevention
  - Screening
  - Referral of injection partners

- **Primary Prevention**
  - Education
  - Access harm reduction services
  - Prevention of IDU (injection drug use)
  - Drug treatment
  - Screening
  - Vaccination
  - Engage drug-using networks

- **Specialty Intervention**
  - Infectious disease
  - Co-infection
  - Co-morbidities
  - Mental health
  - Housing/social support
  - Case management

- **Secondary Prevention**
  - Primary care
  - HCV (Hep C) treatment
  - Drug treatment
  - HBV (Hep B) treatment
  - Education
  - Access harm reduction services
Thank you!

Questions?
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