



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

NICK LYON
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 6, 2016

CONTACT: Jennifer Eisner
(517) 241-2112

Michigan highlights importance of testing during Hepatitis Awareness Month

LANSING, Mich. – More than four million Americans are infected with Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and over 50 percent of them don't know it, which is why the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is joining the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to recognize May as Hepatitis Awareness Month.

HCV is a blood-borne pathogen that affects the liver. Over the course of many years the virus can cause liver damage resulting in cirrhosis, liver cancer, and sometimes death. The National Cancer Institute's Annual Report recently reported that liver cancer incidence and mortality are growing faster than any other common cancer. A major driver of this trend is HCV, which is implicated in 50 percent of all liver cancers. In fact, a CDC study recently found that HCV-related mortality outpaces the mortality of all other nationally notifiable diseases combined, including HIV and tuberculosis.

In Michigan, about 7,000 to 8,000 new cases of HCV are diagnosed annually. While the majority of those are Baby-Boomers born between 1945 and 1965, each year there has been a growing number of cases diagnosed in young adults. The number of HCV cases diagnosed among persons aged 18-29 in Michigan has increased from 246 in 2004 to 1,451 in 2015. This rise in HCV coincides with [increases in opioid and heroin overdose deaths](#), which has been the subject of the Governor's Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Task Force. Sharing of needles and other injection drug use equipment are common modes of transmission of blood-borne viruses like HCV.

There is no vaccine for HCV, but there are treatments that can cure HCV infection. However, because persons with HCV are often asymptomatic for many years, most people have never been tested or diagnosed. The only way to know you are infected is with a blood test. CDC and MDHHS are encouraging residents to talk to their healthcare provider about testing and treatment for HCV, especially those born between 1945 and 1965 or those who have ever injected drugs.

For information about HCV, visit CDC's Know More Hepatitis campaign at www.cdc.gov/KnowMoreHepatitis, or MDHHS's viral hepatitis website at www.michigan.gov/hepatitis. Recommendations from the Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Task Force can be found at <http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277--367961--,00.html>.

Visit <http://www.cancer.gov/research/progress/annual-report-nation> to review the National Cancer Institute's Annual Report, and for the CDC's study on national notifiable disease mortality, visit http://www.natap.org/2016/HCV/ClinInfectDis.-2016-Ly-cid_ciw111.pdf.

###