Hepatitis C: An Emerging Health Crisis Among Our Seniors

As presented at 2014 Healthy Churches 2020 Conference
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Objectives

- Fundamental facts
- Increase awareness of Hepatitis C
- Decrease disease burden, improve outcomes
Fundamental Fact: What is Hepatitis C?

Bloodborne Virus

Infects the liver

Not preventable by vaccine
Fundamental Fact: What does the liver do?

- Liver is necessary for digestion
- Liver functions as a filter
- Liver stores sugar in the form of glycogen
Hepatitis C Virus: The Problem

» Acute infection usually does not have symptoms
» Hepatitis C virus (HCV) can cause chronic liver disease, can take 20-30 years
» Usually diagnosed late in the disease process
» The group most at risk does not recall their risk
Hepatitis C Virus: The Problem

- **UNDERDIAGNOSED**
  - Estimated 3.2 million people infected
  - 50% undiagnosed

- **UNDERTREATED**
  - 50% diagnosed
  - Only about 6% are treated
  - Most common cause of chronic liver disease
  - Most common reason for liver transplant
Undiagnosed = at Risk

- HCV has slow disease progression
- Results in complications
  - 75-85% develop chronic infection
  - 60-70% develop chronic liver disease
  - 5-20% develop cirrhosis
  - Liver Cancer
Liver Complications

Fibrosis
Cirrhosis

Hepatocellular Carcinoma (with cirrhosis)

Fibrosis\(^1\)
Chronic HCV infection can lead to the development of fibrous scar tissue within the liver

Cirrhosis\(^1,2\)
Over time, fibrosis can progress, causing severe scarring of the liver, restricted blood flow, impaired liver function, and eventually liver failure

HCC\(^3\)
Cancer of the liver can develop after years of chronic HCV infection
Liver Complications

- Ascites
- Fluid build up in the abdominal cavity
Morbidity/Mortality

- In 2007, HCV mortality exceeded that of HIV
- It continues to rise
- Quality of life
Hepatitis C Virus:

**Screening Efforts**

- 3.2 million infected
- 1.6 million unaware
  - Move from risk based to age based
  - Educate physicians
  - Start/continue community conversation
  - Change policy
Changing the Outcome

- Raising awareness
- New screening guidelines
- Ensuring access to screening
- Confirmation of diagnosis
- Certain referral for treatment
Testing of Baby Boomers

- Born 1945-1965
- At least once in lifetime
- CDC, USPSTF, AASLD

More than 75 percent of American adults with hepatitis C are baby boomers
Testing of other identified risk groups

- IVDA
- HIV patients
- Tattoos at unregulated facilities
- Certain medical problems
- Transfusions or transplants before 1992
Hepatitis C Virus: Changing the Outcome

- Positive screening tests must be confirmed
  - Second blood test
- Confirmed tests must be referred for treatment
  - Fewer than half of those referred receive care
HCV Treatment: New Answers

- Previously, lengthy, with numerous very difficult side effects
- Since 2011, shorter and more tolerable

Expensive, difficult to access
Some plans choosing not to cover
Thank you!