

HUI HO `OMAIKAI IKA POE O HAWAII
DRUG ADDICTION SERVICES OF HAWAII, Inc.

JUNE 2002 NEWSLETTER

NEWS FLASH!!! Hepatitis C treatment will be available soon for some at DASH's Oahu Clinic!!!

85 to 95% of all people who are on methadone or LAAM treatment are already infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) and most people do not even know it. Most injection drug users have been infected within the first month of starting injection drug use. Because of this, we have decided to hold a special *Hepatitis C health fair in June 2002* for our patients or "Haumana" and their families and start treatment for hepatitis C for a limited number of people here at our clinic.

Many of you have requested more information about hepatitis C and what you can do about it. On June 24th through 28th, our Oahu Clinic will have a special Hepatitis C Health Information Health Fair. This fair is to inform our patients or "Haumana" and their families about the hepatitis C and HCV treatment that we will have available for some people here at the clinic.

Come and hear more information about this epidemic that affects so many of us and what we can do about it!

On Monday June 24th from 8 AM - 10 AM in the main conference room and in conference room #3 we will have a number of speakers to speak about Hepatitis C, its impact on injection drug users, and HCV treatment

that we will be able to provide for some of those who meet the criteria for a special treatment study for people who are on methadone programs. We will also have videos, information, and refreshments.

On Tuesday June 25th from 5:30 AM - 7 AM in conference room #3 we will have information and individual and/or small group discussion about hepatitis C and hepatitis C treatment issues. Your individual questions that were not asked or answered on Monday can be discussed in depth at this time. Refreshments will also be available.

On Friday June 28th from 5:30 AM - 7 AM in the main conference room and in conference room #3 we will have information and individual and/or small group

discussion about hepatitis C and hepatitis C treatment issues. Refreshments will also be available.

You can sign up to see if you will be selected for HCV treatment here at the clinic at any of these times if you meet the special criteria that will be explained at the meetings. {Please see your counselor if you cannot attend any of these events due to a conflict with your work schedule or any other reason.}

We need you to ask your primary care physician for a hepatitis C antibody test to see if you have been infected with this virus. Please bring a copy of test results to your counselor ASAP for your records here at DASH.

Hepatitis C Information

Important information that you need to know about hepatitis C:

AVOID DRINKING ALCOHOL!

Most people who are infected with hepatitis C do not even know it.

People who have injected illicit drugs even once in the past, people who have had unprotected sex with multiple sex partners and people who have had a blood transfusion in the US before July 1992 are especially at risk of having been infected with hepatitis C. 85% of hepatitis C positive people will have hepatitis C for life unless they receive treatment.

Most people will not show signs of starting to have liver disease until 10 to 35 years after they become infected. Drinking alcohol appears to advance liver disease in people who are hepatitis C positive.

Become immunized with hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine if you have not already been immunized. You should also get pneumococcal and influenza vaccines.

Hepatitis C positive people can become very ill if they become infected with the hepatitis A or hepatitis B virus. It is recommended that you become vaccinated for these other hepatitis viruses. (There is still no vaccine for the hepatitis C virus.)

Injection drug users and people who use drugs that may be at risk for using an injection drug at some time in their

lives need to be educated to not share cotton/filters as well as other injection drug equipment. They also need to be educated to start washing their hands with soap and water or use alcohol wipes on their hands when this is not possible before injecting drugs.

Most people have become infected with hepatitis C within the first month after their first injection drug use. The harm reduction message to not share injection drug equipment and/or to use bleach to clean the equipment may not be enough to stop the spread of this virus.

People need to start washing their hands with soap and water before they inject any drug with others to make sure that they do not contaminate the cotton filter or other drug using equipment with viruses by touching them. You cannot see viruses that may be on your fingers tips that you may have pick up by touching an area that was exposed to contaminated blood.

Issues that you should know about transmitting hepatitis C:

HCV not spread by kissing, hugging, sneezing, coughing, food or water, sharing eating utensils or drinking glasses, or casual contact

You should not exclude anyone from work, school, play, child-care or other settings based on HCV infection status

Other issues to prevent to spread of hepatitis C or to prevent becoming infected by another strain (or genotype) of hepatitis C:

- Do not share items that might have blood on them
- Cover all cuts and sores on the skin

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- Do not share personal care items (e.g., razor, toothbrush, nail clippers)
- Do not share home therapy (e.g., needles)
- Do not share drug needles, cookers, cotton filters and/or other drug using equipment and wash your hands with soap and water before touching drug using equipment or cotton filters
- Do not share drug straws
- Do not share body piercing needles; tattoo needles and/or Inks
- Do not have unprotected sex with multiple partners

It is also advisable to not have unprotected sex with anyone who you do not know their HCV, HIV/AIDS, or hepatitis B status (especially if you have had a history of sexually transmitted disease)

If you have had at risk of exposure in the past, please remember to seek:

- 1) counseling to reduce the risk of catching HCV and/or transmitting HCV to others;
- 2) medical referral to determine if you have been infected with hepatitis C and the extent of your liver disease; and, if appropriate,
- 3) counseling to limit your alcohol intake.

HCV negative persons with ongoing risk factors should seek counseling concerning ways to reduce their risk for infection, referral to substance abuse treatment if appropriate, and immunization with hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccines.

Risk factors that may indicate the need for screening for hepatitis C include:

- 1) Blood transfusion or solid organ transplant before July 1992,
- 2) Treatments with blood clotting products before 1987,
- 3) Long-term kidney dialysis,
- 4) Shared drug needles and/or cotton filters; drug straws; body piercing needles; tattoo needles and Inks,
- 5) Accidental needlesticks; blood contact with the eyes, nose, mouth or broken skin,
- 6) Unprotected sex with multiple partners or history of sexually transmitted disease,
- 7) Elevated liver blood tests or rejection from a blood bank after donating blood,
- 8) Previous diagnosis of non-a non-b hepatitis, hepatitis B or HIV, or
- 9) Born to a mother who had hepatitis C.

Websites about hepatitis C:

www.hcvadvocate.org - An excellent Free Monthly Newsletter on hepatitis C with all back issues

www.hepcchallenge.org/manual/index.htm - An excellent Free 400 page hepatitis C booklet on the Internet

www.oasisclinic.org - Describes the research project that is treating hepatitis C patients on methadone

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/hepatitis/c/index.htm - The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) official website on hepatitis C

www.liverfoundation.org - American Liver Foundation's website

www.hepfi.org - Hepatitis Foundation International's website

www.hivandhepatitis.com - HIV and Hepatitis website

www.geocities.com/1Leighann - Another excellent website w/links to veteran's websites about hepatitis C

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