

Will Hepatitis C Testing for High-Risk Infants be Expanded?

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The Alliance for Patient Access, founded in 2006, is a national network of physicians dedicated to ensuring patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care. AfPA accomplishes this mission by recruiting, training and mobilizing policy-minded physicians to be effective advocates for patient access. AfPA is organized as a non-profit 501(c)(4) corporation and headed by an independent board of directors. Its physician leadership is supported by policy advocacy management and public affairs consultants.

In 2012, AfPA established the Institute for Patient Access, a related 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. The Institute for Patient Access is a physician-led policy research organization dedicated to maintaining the primacy of the physician-patient relationship in the provision of quality health care. In furtherance of its mission, IfPA produces educational materials and programming designed to promote informed discussion about patient access to approved therapies and appropriate clinical care.

Visit allianceforpatientaccess.org and instituteforpatientaccess.org to learn more about each organization.



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That could soon change, though, if new [federal recommendations](#) are approved. (1)

New Testing Recommendations

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended:

- All babies born to pregnant women with confirmed or probable hepatitis C should receive testing.
- Infants whose test detects the virus should be referred to healthcare providers with expertise in pediatric hepatitis C management.

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Despite its prevalence, hepatitis C is notoriously underdiagnosed because it can attack the liver for years without the patient showing any symptoms. An estimated 40% of people currently infected do not realize they have it.

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The new recommendations would also help close the disparity that sees some high-risk children evaluated and treated while others do not.

A Health Care Paradox

Hepatitis C has been called a paradox of U.S. health care. The

medical community has never been better equipped to diagnose, treat and prevent this disease, yet infections continue to surge.

Sharing unsterilized needles is a significant cause of hepatitis C infection; the ongoing opioid epidemic fuels its spread. Hepatitis C causes liver inflammation, leading to long-term health problems, including cancer and cirrhosis of the liver. It also kills more Americans than all other infectious diseases, COVID-19 exempted.

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Reaching that goal is an uphill battle. The latest recommendations are vital for that fight and deserve broad support.

References:

1. <https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2022-25421.pdf>

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