Hepatitis C Cluster in Young Injection Drug Users in a Rural Midwestern County: Investigation and Public Health Response
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Background
• Manitowoc County is a rural farm and industry based county along Lake Michigan
• Cluster identified in December 2010 as a result of individuals seeking testing
• Increase in cases in recent years

Figure 1: Reported cases of Hepatitis C infection, Manitowoc County

- 2008
- 2010
- 2011
- Time period

Staff from the local health department developed a hand-drawn social network diagram on a ream of paper 4x7 ½ feet

Figure 2: Persons under age 30 as a percentage of all reported cases of HCV, Wisconsin and Manitowoc County, 2001-2011

- 41% in 2011

Figure 3: The original cluster diagram

- Paper to computer

Key Partnerships Formed
• Manitowoc County Metro Drug Unit
• Manitowoc County Jail
• Wisconsin Department of Corrections
• AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW)
• Area healthcare providers
• Surrounding local health departments
• Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Why use UCI Net/Net Draw software?
• Allowed prioritization and targeted intervention by identifying key people to contact based on risk and connections within the cluster
• Easy to update when new contacts are found and/or clients are tested
• Easy to visualize subsets of the cluster based on risk or demographics

Lessons Learned
• Collaboration with the ARCW Needle Exchange Program and Metro Drug Unit was key
• Reflexive PCR testing is helpful in young PWID populations who may not come back for further testing
• Create client interview form early, to avoid having to re-contact clients for additional information
• Be non-judgmental and focus on the client’s well being, not illegal behaviors
• Talk the talk: know street language for drugs and know the drug culture

Next Steps
• Work with CDC to conduct genotypic analysis
• Continue public health follow-up of clients not yet tested
• Educate the community about the increase in hepatitis C and ways to prevent transmission

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