

RURAL US DRUG USER HEALTH THROUGH SYRINGE ACCESS PROGRAMMING

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¹ Harm Reduction Michigan

Background: Harm Reduction Michigan(HRMI) is a small community-based organization, created to provide important programming in response to the addiction epidemic in rural Michigan, where drug user health has never been conceived outside of a twelve step abstinence framework.

Description of model of care/intervention: HRMI initiated routine Viral Hepatitis and HIV screening and linkage to care (LTC), in partnership with Gilead Science's FOCUS program, as part of our syringe services program (SSP) which serves X rural counties in Michigan. Given the proficiency for vena-puncture, we trained four former injection drug users as phlebotomists, two of which are secondary exchangers for the SSP. We conducted an HIV and HCV point of care test preliminarily followed by a confirmation lab draw which included screening for HBV and was processed by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

Effectiveness: In total, 403 people were tested for HIV, HBV, and HCV. 84 (21%) of these 403 were identified as HCV antibody positive, and 27 (1%) as HCV RNA positive. The secondary exchangers identified 10 cases of HCV. HRMI also 2 cases of HBV, and one case of HIV identified in the first year of screening. All persons screened received their result and LTC rates were 100% (HIV) and 74% (HCV).

Conclusion and next steps: Harm Reduction Michigan's screening program concludes that PWIDs trained to administer blood borne pathogen screening, diagnosis, and linkage to care, can effectively decrease stigma in a vena-compromised, often untrusting, and heavily stigmatized population.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Pamela Lynch discloses an affiliation of Gilead Sciences' Speakers Bureau.