

Screening in Hospital Emergency Room Finds Baby Boomers with Hepatitis C (Birmingham, Alabama)

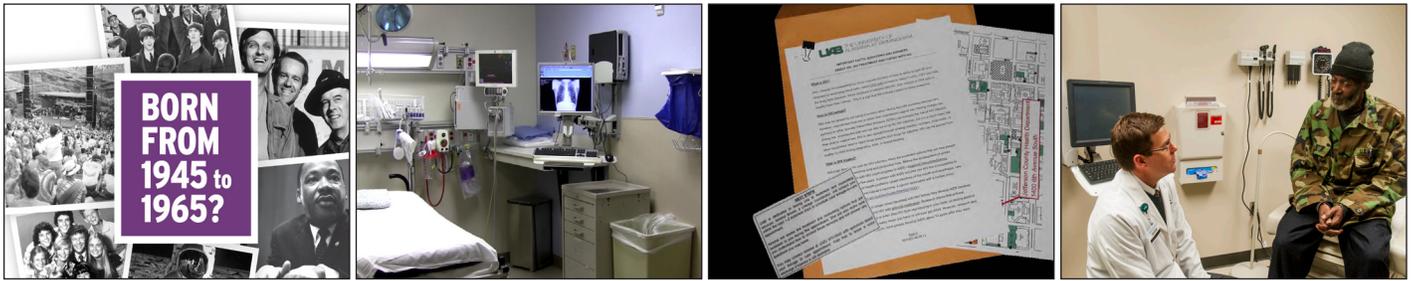


At 65 years old, David had never been treated by a doctor. But on September 3, 2013, the blood in his urine prompted him to seek care at the UAB emergency department, where he was diagnosed with a urinary tract infection and kidney stones. A collaborative project between CDC and UAB had begun that very same day aimed at identifying baby boomers infected with hepatitis C in the emergency department and linking these patients to care and treatment at UAB's 1917 Liver Clinic. A baby boomer himself, David found himself part of the new study, receiving a blood test for hepatitis C virus (HCV) along with other tests to help determine the cause of his urinary health problems.

David was among seven emergency department patients found to be infected with hepatitis C that day. David was surprised at the news of his infection: he had never had any symptoms and had no idea how long he had been living with HCV. Before his diagnosis, David admits that he knew "very little" about hepatitis in general. Now, he's doing his research and asking his doctors questions to learn as much as he can about HCV infection.

David is concerned, not scared, about having hepatitis C. But he also feels fortunate to have discovered that he is HCV-positive, because now he can receive needed care and treatment. This newly-identified patient now offers this wisdom to others: "everybody should go see their doctor and get a checkup!"

- While anyone can get hepatitis C, more than 75% of infected adults are baby boomers, or people born from 1945 through 1965. Most people with hepatitis C don't know they are infected. Getting tested can help people learn whether they are infected and get them into lifesaving care and treatment.
- Hepatitis C is a serious liver disease that results from infection with the hepatitis C virus (HCV). Some people who get infected are able to clear, or get rid of, the virus, but most people who get infected develop a chronic infection that lasts a lifetime. Over time, chronic hepatitis C can cause serious health problems. Hepatitis C is a leading cause of liver cancer and can lead to liver damage, cirrhosis, and even death.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with monies from the CDC Foundation's Viral Hepatitis Action Coalition, is funding a program at the emergency department of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) to find patients who may be infected with hepatitis C. The emergency department medical staff often sees patients at high risk for hepatitis C infection (like baby boomers), making it an ideal setting for this type of study. Using electronic medical records, nurses in the emergency department identify all patients born during 1945–1965 and conduct a brief pre-screening questionnaire with computer prompts to indicate whether patients have received HCV testing before and/or know their results. If no, patients are offered a free and confidential test or an option to refuse the screening.
- For patients who agree, the blood test is ordered and performed by the hospital's laboratory during the patient's visit. If the test results are positive, the patient is given a packet with general information and resource materials about hepatitis C. Within 1



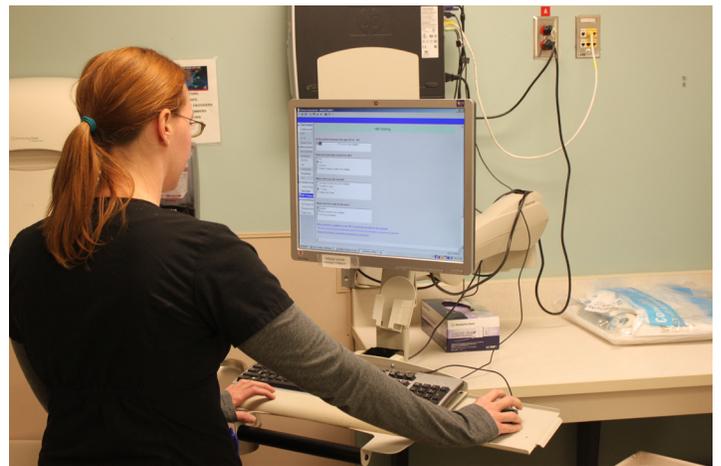
Screening baby boomers in emergency department finds those infected with hepatitis C and links them to care and treatment.

week of the positive diagnosis, the program links the patient to a physician and follow-up appointment with the UAB liver clinic for treatment and care.

- In addition to providing hepatitis C testing to emergency department patients, the program provides biannual hepatitis C counseling seminars for its resident and faculty physicians in the emergency department, as well as in-service training for the nurses, patient-care staff, and lab technicians in the hospital.
- With a modest investment of approximately \$239,000, the program began screening in September 2013. Through March 2014, a total of 3,600 baby boomers had received HCV screening. Of those, 444 had a positive screening test result (12.3%). A total of 354 of persons testing positive were given an additional test to determine whether they had a current HCV infection; 251 (71%) were confirmed to have a current HCV infection. These data reveal that more than 1 of every 15 baby boomers tested learned of their infection as a result of this project, gaining the knowledge needed to seek potentially life-saving care and treatment.



University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Hospital.



Emergency department medical staff.

For more information on hepatitis C, please visit: www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis