Background/Aim

There are a number of patients within NHS Grampian who have chosen not to be treated for Hepatitis C infection due to the previous difficult to tolerate treatments with low viral clearance rates. There are new more effective treatments with less side effects, it is important that patients are aware of these in order to make informed choices in their care. The Scottish government aims to reduce long-term morbidity and mortality from HCV infection by increasing the number of patients who are on HCV treatment.

This project aimed to give patients, no longer accessing the hepatology clinic, information on advances in Hepatitis C treatment and to give them the opportunity to access these treatments. A locally held Hepatitis C database holds information on all Hepatitis C antibody positive patients who have been referred to NHS Grampian’s Hepatology service. This database could be used to identify all patients who are no longer under follow-up or who have never engaged with the service to re-engage them, and offer treatment to those who require it.

Method

• Use the Hepatitis C database to identify patients who meet the following inclusion criteria – active Hepatitis C, live within Grampian and are no longer under follow-up.
• Communicate with NHS National Services Scotland (NHS NSS) to get up-to-date demographic details on patients.
• Specialist Nurses to contact patients & GP practices, providing information about the developments in Hepatitis C treatment and offer appointments with the Hepatology service.
• Organising treatment for those patients who are suitable.

Process Changes

Time allocated within team work plan to focus on the project.

1. Specialist Nurses contact patients and GPs directly via letter / telephone informing them of developments in treatment and offer re-engagement with the service.
2. Contact NHS NSS to get up-to-date details on patients.
3. Utilise NHS Grampian’s Hepatitis C database to identify patients who are no longer under follow-up.

Results

2728 patients were on the Hepatitis C database, 2241 did not meet inclusion criteria (82%).

486 patients were identified as no longer under follow-up (18%).

Specialist Nurses have attempted to contact 390 of those patients identified as no longer under follow-up (80%).

See Flowchart 1.

88 of the 390 attempted contacts have attended appointments with the Hepatology service (23%).

There has been no response from 191 of the attempted contacts (49%).

68 of the 390 attempted contacts are either on, awaiting or have completed treatment (17%).

Natural History of HCV Infection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Incidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acute Hepatitis</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic Hepatitis</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cirrhosis</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decompensation</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

This project has re-engaged HCV positive patients with the Hepatology service and increased the numbers who have commenced treatment. The project is ongoing, many attempted contacts were made recently, this may account for the patients who have made no response. The project has been a team success, encouraging new ways of working and has identified areas for improvement.

Next steps

• Analyse the data in six months to assess response to treatment.
• Share project results with the wider Blood Borne Virus group and other Healthboards.
• Develop new approaches to engaging with and treating patients with Hepatitis C.

References


Specialist Nurse Feedback

Contacting patients via letter and giving them the opportunity to call, made them “in control” of their own health

Patients who attended spread the word to others including partners, friends and family

Frustrating time factor as other areas also requiring work

Further information contact @ hobkirk@ NHS.net

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