Safe injection to prevent infection:

Specific injection practices are associated with Hepatitis C exposure, suggesting opportunities for targeted harm reduction intervention in people who inject drugs

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Background

- Transmission of HCV has been linked to unsafe injection practices
- This study aims to characterize risk factors associated with HCV exposure amongst people who inject drugs in Maine

Methods

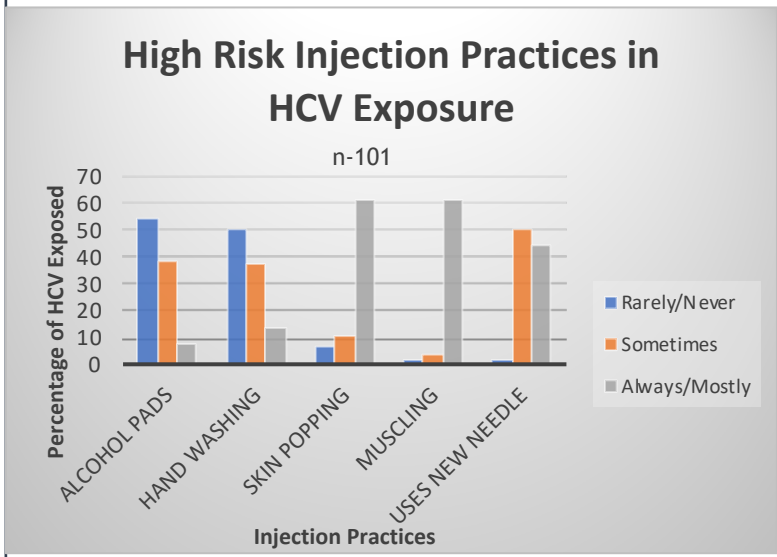
- Data were obtained through a survey and electronic health records from n=101 participants hospitalized at 4 hospitals in Maine with IDU-associated infections
- HCV exposure was defined as HCV antibody positive and/or self-reported exposure
- The Bacterial Infections Risk Scale for Injectors (BIRSI-7) score was used to assess safety of injection practices
- Descriptive analyses and univariate regression modeling were used to analyze data

Results

- n=76 (75%) participants had HCV exposure
- **71% and 67%** of HCV-exposed participants reported **infrequent use of alcohol pads** prior to injecting ($p<.01$) and **infrequent hand-washing** ($p=.09$), respectively
- A higher BIRSI-7 score indicated higher odds of HCV exposure (OR=1.48, 95% CI 1.10-2.04)

Discussion

- **Lack of alcohol pad use and infrequent hand washing** were related to HCV exposure
- **Harm reduction intervention services** targeted to specific injection practices could be beneficial in screening and prevention of HCV exposure amongst people who inject drugs



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