

Date:

Dear Colleague:

As you may know, Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) is a silent epidemic with an estimated infected population of nearly 5 million persons in the United States. Unfortunately, 50%-75% of these individuals may be entirely unaware of their infection. These undiagnosed persons could not receive evaluation, effective care, or treatment of their disease (Hepatitis C is now curable in over 70% of typical patients). They also remain chronically at risk for silent progression of liver disease, liver failure, and hepatocellular carcinoma. Hepatitis C is a public health concern, and transmission from person-to-person can only be diminished with identification and education.

On June 24, 2013, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) addressed this enormous public health concern by [recommending clinicians provide persons born within the years of 1945 to 1965 a one-time screening for HCV](#). This preventive service was determined to be a beneficial service to the target population and given a grade of “B”. The USPSTF’s recommendation echoes the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s endorsement of HCV screening published in MMWR [“Recommendations for the Identification of Chronic Hepatitis C Virus Infection Among Persons Born During 1945-1965”](#). Recent studies (*Ann Intern Med.* 2012; 156:263-270.) have demonstrated that **birth cohort hepatitis C screening of individuals born between 1945 and 1965 would identify nearly one million previously undiagnosed persons**. According to the CDC, individuals born between 1945 and 1965 are five times more likely to test positive for hepatitis C antibodies. Combined with improved treatments, more comprehensive screening would result in a cost-effective decrease in hepatitis-related morbidity and mortality.

I strongly urge all primary care practices to implement the USPSTF and CDC recommendations for birth cohort (1945 – 1965) screening as soon as possible. Screening of high-risk patients should continue as previously recommended. This approach has already been endorsed and adopted by many academic, public health, and university centers. A simple Hepatitis C screening antibody test (*CPT code 86803: Quest 8472 LabCorp 140659*) could make a big difference in the care of your patient. Please feel free to call or email me if you have any thoughts or questions.

Sincerely,