

1.0 Purpose of this procedure

To provide information and guidance aimed at the identification and management of HCWs infected with hepatitis C virus.

2.0 Management of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

Transmission of Hepatitis C Virus from staff to patients has been documented in the UK.

- 2.1 All healthcare workers with direct clinical contact, who are new to the NHS, are offered pre-test discussion and Hepatitis C antibody testing by NHS Lothian. For non EPP workers, this is an offer only and there is no requirement on the worker to agree.
- 2.2 Healthcare workers with direct clinical care have a professional responsibility in terms of health and safety of their patients such that they should seek advice if they believe that they have been exposed to Hepatitis C infection.
- 2.3 **Staff in EPP Posts**
Healthcare workers currently in EPP posts who believe that they may have been exposed to Hepatitis C infection must promptly seek and follow confidential professional advice on whether they should be tested for Hepatitis C virus RNA. If they are found to be Hepatitis C RNA positive then they must cease all EPPs.
- 2.4 Healthcare workers who know they are infected with Hepatitis C are required to report this and must be tested for HCV RNA. Those found to be RNA positive must cease all EPPs.
- 2.5 Where a member of staff undergoes a successful course of therapy and remains HCV RNA negative 3 months after completion of treatment then they may resume EPPs. A further test for HCV RNA must be taken after a further 3 months to confirm that the HCW remains HCV RNA negative.

3.0 Staff who are to Commence Training or Employment Involving EPPs

- 3.1 All staff to be employed in EPP posts for the first time (new starts or existing staff) require:
 - a) to demonstrate that they have been tested for HCV and were:
 - HCV antibody negative
 - HCV antibody positive but HCV RNA negative at the time of testing.
 - or
 - b) to be tested for HCV antibody, and if found positive, to be tested for HCV RNA.
- 3.2 Any healthcare worker who prior to commencement of employment for an EPP post is found to be HCV RNA positive will not be employed in an EPP post.

- 3.3 Where a member of staff undergoes a successful course of therapy and remains HCV RNA negative 3 months after completion of treatment then they may be employed. A further test for HCV RNA must be taken after a further 3 months to confirm that the HCW remains HCV RNA negative.
- 3.4 The timing of HCV testing prior to employment or training for EPP will be dependent upon the professional discipline. Some staff groups where EPPs are integral to the job should be tested prior to commencing appropriate professional training, e.g. dentists and midwives. Others will require testing following completion of basic training and prior to undertaking specialist roles which entail performing EPPs, e.g. GP trainees who will undertake minor surgery and nursing staff who are to be employed in Accident & Emergency departments or operating theatres.
- 3.5 In NHS Lothian, all staff to be employed in EPP posts must provide evidence of IVS (Identified Validated Sample) testing or be subject to such testing prior to taking up the post. The system of clearance is incorporated into the Fitness Screening by OHS.

4.0 HCV Testing

- 4.1 Prior to obtaining samples, the Occupational Health Service will explain to staff the testing arrangements and how a positive result may affect future employment requiring performance of EPPs.
- 4.2 Testing for HCV antibodies requires one IVS (EDTA blood) to be sent to Specialist Virology Centre, RIE. Should the testing indicate the presence of HCV antibodies then a further two IVSs (EDTA blood) must be obtained and sent to Specialist Virology Centre, RIE for HCV RNA testing.
- 4.3 The Occupational Health Service will inform the HCW of the results and the implications.
- 4.4 Healthcare workers already undertaking EPPs are not required to cease EPPs whilst awaiting results providing the testing is carried out promptly.
- 4.5 Any HCW who already know that they are HCV positive or who are intending to undertake professional training for a career that involves EPP who refuses to be tested for Hepatitis C antibody, and if required HCV RNA, will not be permitted to undertake EPPs or be employed in an EPP post.

5.0 Occupational Health Advice for Hepatitis C Infected HCWs

Where a HCW is identified as being infected with Hepatitis C, they will be assessed by an accredited specialist Occupational Physician, who will discuss appropriate further clinical management with the HCW. Advice will also be given on minimising the risk of transmission in the health care setting and to close contacts.

6.0 Responsibilities of clinicians

- 6.1 Clinicians should remind any BBV infected HCW under their care to refer themselves to OHS. If they become aware that an infected HCW is performing EPP or has done so in the past and has not followed the professional requirements of this policy to refer themselves to the OHS, or to modify their practice due to BBV infection, the clinician has a responsibility to inform OHS.

- 6.2 If the Occupational Health Physician identifies either risk of ongoing transmission or risk to patients previously treated by the HCW, they should notify the Consultant in Public Health Medicine (CPHM) or Director of Public Health (DPH). In cases where regulatory bodies e.g. the GMC, GDC, NMC need to be informed, the Medical Director/Nurse Director (for HCWs), or relevant personnel within the training institution for those in training, would be notified.