

Study quantifies prevalence of chronic HCV infection

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risk factor.

"These data underscore the urgency of identifying the millions of persons who remain infected and linking them to appropriate care and treatment," the authors write.

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(HealthDay)—The prevalence of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is about 1 percent, with 2.7 million U.S. residents estimated as having chronic HCV infection, according to a study published in the March 4 issue of the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

Maxine M. Denniston, M.S.P.H., from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and colleagues used data from 30,074 participants from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2003 to 2010 to estimate the prevalence of chronic HCV infection. Interviews were conducted to ascertain demographic characteristics and possible risks and exposures for infection.

The researchers found that the estimated prevalence of HCV infection was 1.0 percent, based on 273 participants who tested positive for HCV RNA, which corresponded to 2.7 million chronically infected persons in the U.S. non-institutionalized civilian population. Infected individuals had a higher likelihood of being 40- to 59-years-old, male, and non-Hispanic black, and were more likely to have less education and lower family income. Chronic HCV infection was significantly associated with illicit drug use (including injection drugs) and blood transfusion receipt before 1992. Nearly half (49 percent) of those with HCV infection reported having neither

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