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Article

# Hepatitis C Virus Screening Among Children Exposed During Pregnancy

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## Abstract

**OBJECTIVES:** Because of the opioid epidemic, hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is increasing among pregnant women, resulting in an increased risk of perinatal transmission and HCV infection among children. Our primary objectives in this study were to determine the prevalence of HCV among pregnant women and the frequency of pediatric HCV screening.

**METHODS:** A population-based, retrospective cohort of pregnant women who delivered between 2006 and 2014 was identified and classified as HCV infected or HCV uninfected by billing codes. Infant records linked to the HCV-infected pregnant women were identified and queried for HCV tests and the receipt of well-child services, which were defined as the presence of hemoglobin and/or lead testing at or after 9 months of age.

**RESULTS:** Between 2006 and 2014, 1043 (1.2%) HCV-infected pregnant women delivered, and the HCV prevalence increased by 60%. HCV-infected women were more likely to be <30 years of age (67% vs 53%;  $P < .001$ ), white (93% vs 72%;  $P < .001$ ), insured by Medicaid (77% vs 29%;  $P < .001$ ), and have opiate use disorder (68% vs 1%;  $P < .001$ ) than HCV-uninfected women. Infants born to HCV-infected women were more likely to be preterm (<37 weeks' gestation; 22% vs 10%;  $P < .001$ ) and of low birth weight (<2500 g; 23% vs 8%;  $P < .001$ ). Among 1025 HCV-exposed infants with available pediatric records, 323 (31%) received well-child services, and among these, only 96 (30%) were screened for HCV.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Despite the increased HCV prevalence among pregnant women and the risk of perinatal HCV transmission, HCV-exposed infants are not adequately screened, and many pediatric HCV infections remain undetected.

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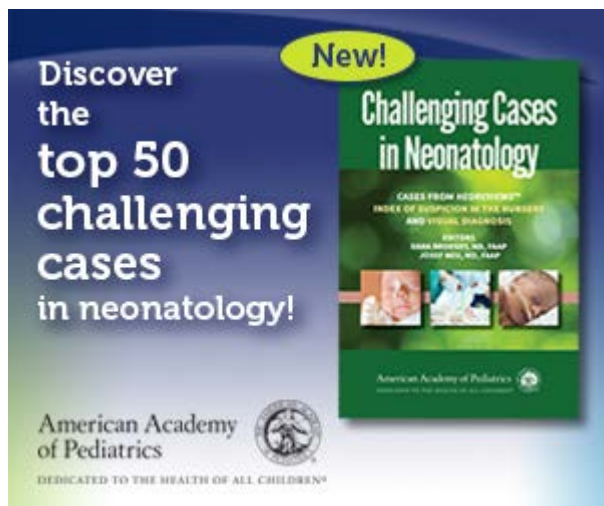
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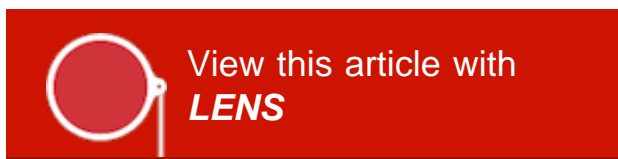
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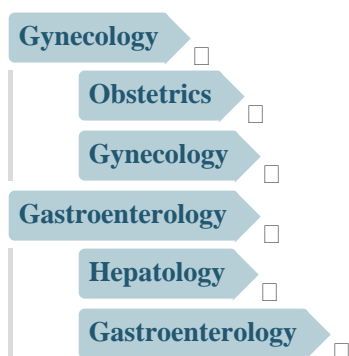
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