



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

OLGA DAZZO
DIRECTOR

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CONTACT: Angela Minicuci
(517) 241-2112

Four Michigan Facilities Linked to New Hampshire Hepatitis C Investigation

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) has been investigating the employment history of a hepatitis C-positive healthcare worker who was arrested recently in New Hampshire for allegedly obtaining injectable narcotics and infecting patients with the hepatitis C virus.

Hepatitis C is a bloodborne viral infection, estimated to infect 1.6 percent of the U.S. population. It can cause inflammation of the liver that may lead to chronic health issues. Most infected individuals do not know they have the virus because hepatitis C can damage the liver for many years with few noticeable symptoms.

MDCH has confirmed that this individual previously worked in at least six Michigan facilities from 2003-2007 and is known to have been infected with hepatitis C since at least June 2010. The investigation has not uncovered evidence that the individual was infected with hepatitis C while employed at any Michigan facility. A negative hepatitis C test result at one hospital during his employment allows MDCH to exclude two hospitals from further examination as there was no risk posed by this individual to patients at these facilities.

MDCH recommends that all individuals with known risk factors for hepatitis C virus be tested. If you were a patient at one or more of the facilities listed below during the identified time periods and you received an injectable narcotic, you may have a risk factor of which you were previously unaware. You should consult the facility contact identified below and/or your primary care provider regarding hepatitis C testing. While the receipt of an injectable narcotic at these facilities during these time frames may represent a possible increased risk for hepatitis C for patients, it is clearly not the only risk. If you do not know if an injectable narcotic was administered to you, contact the facility to find out more information. While this testing is important, it need not be considered an emergency procedure.

“Hepatitis C is a chronic condition that can damage the liver for many years without noticeable symptoms,” said Dean Sienko, Interim Chief Medical Executive of the MDCH. “Our goal of recommending testing is to ensure the appropriate use of the modern medicine now available to prevent deaths from hepatitis. In order to help potentially affected individuals, we are asking patients to get tested to protect their health.”

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Due to the length of time since potential exposure as well as the prevalence of the disease in the general population, a positive test result for patients of the facilities named below may not conclusively prove that hepatitis C was acquired from the individual currently under investigation at these facilities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that more than 2 million U.S. citizens born from 1945 through 1965 have been infected with the virus and is currently recommending testing for everyone born in that time frame. Hepatitis C can be detected with blood tests and treated with antiviral medications

Identified Michigan hospitals, dates of interest, and facility contact information:

Hospital Name	Dates of Interest	Facility Contact Information
Sinai Grace Hospital*	June-October 2005	1-888-300-3627 or www.dmc.org/mdch
Harper Hospital**	October 2005-September 2006	1-888-300-3627 or www.dmc.org/mdch
University of Michigan Hospital (Main Campus)	September 11-December 8, 2006	1-877-233-4040
Oakwood Annapolis Hospital	January 15-September 15, 2007	1-734-467-4111

*Patients who underwent procedures in interventional radiology that required intravenous narcotics

**Patients who underwent procedures in the cardiac catheterization laboratory

Because this is an ongoing investigation, MDCH will continue to identify past employment history and work with all identified facilities in Michigan as well as the CDC. The MDCH will provide any updates to this information as it becomes available. For questions and information about hepatitis C, please visit the MDCH website at www.michigan.gov/hivstd or the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/hepatitis.

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