

Eliminating Hepatitis C in Washington State

Improving lives and ending an epidemic through partnership

Background

Hepatitis C is the most common blood borne disease in the United States. Between 75 and 85 percent of people infected develop chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) which is a lifelong condition that can cause severe scarring (cirrhosis) of the liver, liver cancer, the need for a liver transplant, and even death. The death toll from HCV continues to rise, tied to the opioid epidemic and the rise in drug injection. About 60,000 Washingtonians live with chronic HCV; approximately 30,000 are covered by state-purchased health care insurance.

In September 2018, Gov. Jay Inslee unveiled a first-in-nation approach to eliminating hepatitis C in Washington by 2030. Among other things, his Directive 18-13 directs the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), to initiate an innovative strategy to purchase curative hepatitis C virus medications.

Hep C Free Washington

As part of Gov. Inslee's directive, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) convened and facilitated an HCV-elimination coordinating committee built of stakeholders from various sectors, including individuals personally affected by HCV.

[The plan developed by this committee](#) addresses needed improvements in Washington's health system and ensure that all people who have or are at risk for contracting HCV have access to preventive services, know their status, and connect to care and ultimately the cure.

The Washington solution

HCA, collaborating with other state agencies, initiated a competitive procurement for the drugs used to cure HCV which also considered outreach and screening strategies in addition to cost.

Effective July 1, 2019 HCA contracted with AbbVie, a research-based global biopharmaceutical company.

"Halting the spread of HCV means more than having a cure available," said HCA Chief Medical Officer Dr. Judy Zerzan. "It takes committed partners and on-the-ground patient support. With this partnership, AbbVie will play an important role as part of a broader team of participants that includes clinicians, public health officials, the social service community, and the provider community."

AbbVie has a long history in the field of infectious diseases, including HIV and HCV. Their extensive clinical, research, and market expertise, along with their data capabilities, will help Washington optimize HCV treatment.

As part of the partnership, AbbVie will coordinate with Washington to find individuals who are not yet treated; educate the health care workforce about screening and providing curative HCV treatment; address barriers to care such as stigma and the lack of urgency to treat among patients and providers; and connect patient to HCV prescribers.

Advantages of the modified subscription model

AbbVie and HCA entered into two agreements. One is a traditional drug rebate arrangement for those in state-run facilities and public and school employees and the second is a modified subscription model for Apple Health (Medicaid). Medicaid's contract includes:

- A discounted price for HCV drugs
- A treatment goal where, once met, the HCV drug cost is negligible
- Outreach support services done in collaboration with Hep C Free Washington work