

## HEPATITIS C SCREENING AMONG INFANTS BORN TO HEPATITIS C POSITIVE WOMEN WHO INJECT DRUGS

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**Background** and Aims: There is a lack of data on hepatitis C (HCV) screening among children born to HCV-positive women in Australia, the majority of whom acquired infection from injecting drug use (IDU). This study assessed HCV screening among children born to anti-HCV-positive women with an IDU history.

### **Methods:**

Pregnant anti-HCV-positive women aged  $\geq 18$  years at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital (RPAH), Sydney were invited into a cohort study between June 2010 and May 2012. Participants were followed-up until the child-participant was aged  $\geq 2$  years. Data were collected via interviews and medical records. Women were informed of child-testing recommendations (HCV-RNA testing at 2 months and anti-HCV testing at  $\geq 18$  months).

**Results:** Twenty-nine (31 pregnancies) of 76 eligible women were recruited (38% response). Median age was 33 years (range 21-43) and 5/30(17%) had instrumental-vaginal delivery. Most infants were full-term, but 23/28 (82%) required post-delivery nursery admission. Women were difficult to follow-up post-delivery despite reimbursements, reminders and appointment reschedules. Thirteen (42%) children were assumed into Family and Community Services (FACS) care (median 7 days post-delivery). Eleven (35%) infants had HCV-RNA testing at  $\leq 6$  months and 10/31(32%) had anti-HCV testing at  $\geq 18$  months. Five mothers (16%) deferred testing and information was inaccessible for eight (26%). No cases of vertical transmission were identified.

**Discussion:** We were unable to obtain complete HCV testing information for infants at risk of HCV and a proportion are not tested within the first two years of life. The high prevalence of children assumed into care in this sample is alarming.