

Complementing EMR-based Interventions to Improve Hepatitis C Screening

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To the Editor,

We read with interest the recent publication by Yeboah-Korang *et al.* titled “Hepatitis C screening in commercially insured US birth-cohort patients: Factors associated with testing and effect of an EMR-based screening alert.”^[1] We were pleased to read efforts of Yeboah-Korang *et al.* to improve HCV testing for the 1945–1965 birth cohort in accordance with national HCV screening recommendations. Although the authors found that a physician-facing electronic medical record (EMR) best-practice alert (BPA) increased HCV testing a significant amount, the rate of testing after implementation remained low at 10%. This suggests that patient-directed approaches could complement physician-directed EMR BPAs to achieve national HCV screening recommendations.

Physicians believe that having patients who are educated about HCV would help physicians better adhere to the HCV screening recommendations.^[2] National campaigns, such as those from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and pharmaceutical companies, are attempting to increase awareness among birth cohort patients on the need to be HCV tested. We believe a timely, personalized HCV testing campaign directed at patients may complement existing physician-directed efforts, such as EMR prompts, to educate patients and help improve HCV testing in healthcare settings.

Text messaging may provide an efficient mode of communication to educate birth cohort patients of the need for HCV testing

and is already used by 68% of clinics to deliver patient appointment reminders.^[3] Text messages could empower patients to ask their physicians about HCV testing. Unlike national media campaigns, text messages can be personalized with patients’ names and be sent to the patient immediately before their clinic appointment to help them set the agenda for their appointment. Our own proof of concept study (data unpublished) of a text message campaign to improve HCV testing in primary care has shown acceptability, feasibility, and a promising trend for increasing testing rates.

A multifaceted approach is needed to augment HCV testing. Physician-based EMR prompts, such as the one implemented by Yeboah-Korang *et al.*, have shown mixed results.^[1,4,5] We are optimistic that complementing physician-based BPAs with patient education and engagement would further improve HCV testing in healthcare settings.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared.

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