End the Epidemics: Californians Mobilizing to End HIV, HCV, and STDs

Ryan Clary
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Christian Ramers, MD, MPH
Family Health Centers of San Diego

Scott Suckow
American Liver Foundation, Pacific Coast Division

Heidi Aiem
County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency
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Moderator: Scott Suckow, Executive Director
American Liver Foundation, Pacific Coast Division

The American Liver Foundation’s mission is to facilitate and promote education, support and research for the treatment and cure of liver disease.
Panelists

**Ryan Clary**
Consultant, End the Epidemics: Californians Mobilizing to End HIV, HCV, and STDs

**Heidi Aiem**
Public Health Services – HIV, STD & Hepatitis Branch
County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency

**Christian Ramers, MD, MPH**
Assistant Medical Director - Research & Special Populations, Family Health Centers of San Diego
• Pull out your cell phones
• Text to: 22333
• Message: PHSAS
What is your basic understanding of hepatitis C?

A. I have no knowledge
B. I have some knowledge
C. I have a strong understanding
D. I am an expert
Ryan Clary
Consultant, End the Epidemics: Californians Mobilizing to End HIV, HCV, and STDs
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Ryan Clary
Project Consultant
April 25, 2019
California – A Leader in Health Care

- Aggressively implemented Affordable Care Act
- Expanded Medi-Cal before ACA passage
- Established strong state-based marketplace
- Cut uninsured rate by over 50% from 2013 to 2017
- California’s health care system is set up to improve access to testing, care, and treatment for people with HIV, HCV, and STDs
Falling Behind in Addressing HIV, HCV, STDs

• Highest number of annual new HIV infections per year (5,000)
• Close to half of people with HIV don’t have consistent care or treatment access
• 400,000 people living with chronic HCV
• Opioid crisis has led to dramatic increases in new HCV infections
• 45% increase in STDs since 2013
• California leads the country in cases of congenital syphilis
• Ranks first in the country for total cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis
Community Response

- April 2018 meeting with 50 advocates
- Discussed need for statewide HIV and HCV strategy
- Immediately recognized STDs must be included
- Agreed California has stalled in fighting all 3 epidemics
- Recognized state is behind others in developing end the epidemic strategies
- Decided to take advantage of gubernatorial election
- Agreed most effective strategy is to address as a syndemic
What is a Syndemic?

- Two or more concurring epidemics in a population
- Increases prevalence and burden of disease
- Syndemic approach is different from biomedical
  - Treats diseases concurrently
  - Addresses health disparities/social determinants of health
Why Treat as Syndemic?

- Gay and bisexual men at increased risk for HIV and STDs
- People of color disproportionately affected by HIV, HCV, and STDs
- Young people have experienced increased rates of HIV, HCV, and STDs
- People who use drugs at increased risk for HIV and HCV
- Women at increased risk for HCV and STDs
- Having STD increases risk of acquiring HIV
- People with HIV and HCV have greater risk of liver disease
Community Process

- Established a statewide working group of HIV, HCV, STD advocates
- Chose name: End the Epidemics: Californians Mobilizing to End HIV, HCV, and STDs
- Formed HIV, HCV, STD work groups
- Put out call for “game changer” recommendations
- Developed community consensus statement
Consensus Statement

- Calls for Governor Newsom to convene high-level task force of stakeholders to develop end the epidemics strategy
- Highlights the syndemic and urgency
- Describes the tools that are available
- Presents 6 goals to address the syndemic
- Signed by over 140 organizations
- Formally launched on March 6th
  - Endorsed by San Diego Union Tribune
  - Op-ed by Assemblymember Todd Gloria and State Senator Scott Wiener
Goals in Consensus Statement

- Increase the number of people living with HIV, HCV, and STDs who are aware of their status;

- Increase access to comprehensive HIV, HCV, and STD prevention services;

- Ensure linkage to and retention in culturally competent, quality health care for everyone living with and vulnerable to HIV, HCV, and STDs;
Goals in Consensus Statement

- Increase training and capacity building to strengthen and integrate the HIV, HCV and STD provider workforce;

- Address social determinants of health that impact people living with at increased risk for HIV, HCV, and STDs;

- Develop and track metrics to assess progress toward ending the HIV, HCV, and STD epidemics.
Governor’s Response

- Spokesman Jesse Melgar said the governor “recognizes the importance of fighting to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the HIV, hepatitis C and sexually transmitted infection epidemics” and “looks forward to working on these issues.” (California Health Report, March 12, 2019)

- A spokesman for Newsom told the B.A.R. that the governor welcomes seeing a formal proposal from the coalition of health groups or legislation submitted by the lawmakers. (Bay Area Reporter, March 13, 2019)
Current Actions

- $2 million budget proposal for the task force
- Budget hearings on April 25th and May 6th
- End the Epidemics Day of Action on April 30th
- Town Hall meetings
- San Francisco AIDS Foundation petition
- Over 100 Statewide Working Group members
  - Strategize via email and monthly calls
  - Outreach with community consensus statement
  - Continue to recruit new members
Successes and Opportunities

- Addressing epidemics as a syndemic makes us unique.
- Community agreement that the syndemic approach is the most effective and innovative way to address these three epidemics in California.
- We have also received very positive feedback from key staff in state agencies and the Legislature.
Successes and Opportunities

- Governor Newsom supported the concept during his campaign and has continued to indicate support for moving forward.
- Community and public health leaders have embraced the idea of a new statewide coalition to work on the strategic plan and its implementation.
- There is a concurrent effort at the Department of Public Health to integrate HIV, HCV and STD into one department, which we support and believe will be helpful to our public health program efficacy.
Next Steps

- Continued advocacy with Governor’s staff
- Advocate for $2 million request for task force
- Budget hearings
- End the Epidemics “Day of Action”
- Town Hall meetings
- Continue to collect sign ons
- Refine/finalize game changer recommendations
- Outreach to recruit more coalition members
Get Involved

- Sign the consensus statement/circulate widely
- Join the End the Epidemics Statewide Working Group (email: clarystrategies@gmail.com)
- Sign the San Francisco AIDS Foundation petition
For More Information

Contact:
Ryan Clary
End the Epidemics Consultant
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GETTING TO ZERO

Heidi Aiem
County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency
HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR GETTING TO ZERO


2012 2015 2016
NEW HIV DIAGNOSES, SAN DIEGO COUNTY, 1981-1990

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR GETTING TO ZERO


2012  2015  2016
GETTING TO ZERO

GETTING 2 ZERO
STOP HIV

Test

Improve

Engage

Prevent

Treat
Goal: Reduce new HIV infections in San Diego County
Goal: Improve viral suppression among persons living with diagnosed HIV
“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not lead single-issue lives.”

—Audre Lorde
GETTING TO ZERO

Stable Housing

Other needs

Adequate Income

Stigma-free treatment

Food Security
ELIMINATE HEPATITIS C

INITIATIVE

Christian B. Ramers, MD, MPH, AAHIVS
Infectious Disease specialist and Assistant Medical Director at
Family Health Centers of San Diego

Community Information Exchange Summit
April 25, 2019
WHAT IS VIRAL HEPATITIS?

- Hepatitis is inflammation in the liver
- Viral hepatitis is inflammation of the liver caused by a virus
- Hepatitis A, B & C are the most common types in the U.S.

Image Credit: https://giphy.com/gifs/search/prove
Who do you think should be tested to see if they have hepatitis C?
HEPATITIS C

- Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV)
- HCV is transmitted blood to blood
- Can cause liver cirrhosis (scarring), liver cancer, liver failure and death
- Of every 100 people infected with HCV:
  - 75-85 will develop chronic infection
  - 10-20 will develop cirrhosis (scarring)
- Most have no symptoms initially and have the disease for many years before it is diagnosed
- An estimated 3.5 million people in the United States have chronic hepatitis C
- An estimated 41,200 acute hepatitis C cases occurred in 2016
More than 2,500 cases of chronic HCV is reported every year in San Diego.

2011-2016 approximately 70-100 San Diego County residents died per year, with chronic HCV listed as an underlying cause of death.

Both men and women affected, 63% of reported cases occur in ages 45+.
July 1, 2018 – Policy issued by California Department of Health Care Services recommends treatment for all individuals with chronic HCV infection (except those with short life expectancy)

- More individuals diagnosed with HCV can receive treatment immediately

Current Medication – Provides a highly effective cure, in the form of an oral pill, with few side effects

- Older interferon-based treatments were less effective, lengthier, injections-based, and had more side effects

Treatment is Prevention
In 2014, the World Health Assembly requested the World Health Organization (WHO) to examine the feasibility of eliminating HCV.

In 2014, New York City launched Hep Free NYC.

In 2015, New York State adopted its state-wide plan.

In 2016, San Francisco adopted End Hep C SF.

In 2017, WHO sets targets for elimination by 2030.

Cities, Counties, and States starting to organize:

- Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Mexico and Illinois.

In November of 2018 San Diego BOS approved a 12-month planning process for an eliminate Hepatitis C initiative.
Public-private partnership utilizing a collective impact approach

Development a 3-5 year roadmap for eliminating HCV as a public health threat

Elimination defined as 80% decrease in new cases of chronic HCV by 2030 and 65% reduction of HCV mortality by 2030

One year planning process coordinating efforts from stakeholders

Collective impact approach as used by other Live Well SD initiatives
COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Advisory

Steering

Facilitating Agency

Access, Testing, Treatment and Prevention

Research and Surveillance

Consumer
For those who use drugs, do you think having access to clean needles would help to eliminate hepatitis C?
In order to eliminate hepatitis C in San Diego County, what should be done?
How can we improve screening for hepatitis C in the general population and specific sub-groups?

How can make treatment more accessible?

What should be done to prevent the spread of hepatitis C?
QUESTIONS?