

# Point-of-Care Testing for Hepatitis C

Q&A with **ANTHONY MARTINEZ, MD**



## Q What is point-of-care testing?

Point-of-care testing is a method of quickly connecting patients to testing. When patients arrive and meet with a health care provider, they are at the initial point of care. In a point-of-care testing model, their provider may have the resources to test them on site for conditions.

Test-and-treat is a good example. This model streamlines a patient's treatment path, because the patient immediately begins treatment at the point of care.

## Q How does this test-and-treat model work?

After patients arrive at the clinic, they are tested for a condition. If patients test positive, they can immediately begin treatment while they are at the clinic.

For patients with hepatitis C, the test-and-treat model speeds and simplifies access to curative treatment. Patients arrive at a clinic, are tested for hepatitis C, are prescribed a treatment and have the medication they need to cure their condition dispensed to them immediately.

In short, all the tests and resources necessary to cure patients' hepatitis C are available at a single point of care. The model also improves patient adherence by eliminating the need for follow-up visits, which can sometimes be skipped or delayed, preventing patients from curing their hepatitis C.

## Q Can patients easily access the test-and-treat model?

Unfortunately, no. Point-of-care testing may not be available at every clinic. The machines needed to swiftly process results are expensive. They are often found only at larger testing and treatment sites.

And in instances where patients can visit a clinic with point-of-care testing, they may not have coverage for testing and treatment. While the capability may be available, many hepatitis C patients do not currently have access to this effective treatment model.

## Q How can policymakers help?

Policymakers can help patients and providers fully utilize the test-and-treat model to help curb the spread of hepatitis C. Health plans can also ensure that patients have coverage for testing and curative treatments. Hepatitis C is not only treatable; it's curable. Curing it can prevent other severe health conditions from developing or being exacerbated.

Point-of-care testing can make a big difference for many patients, providing them with answers and connecting them with treatment. This game-changing process can help many patients achieve a life free of hepatitis C.



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## About the Author

Anthony Martinez, MD, is the medical director of hepatology at Erie County Medical Center. He cares for patients with addiction disorders or liver diseases, including hepatitis.