

Hepatitis C Investigation and Testing Press Release.txt  
From: Amy Holmes [aholmes@nchcnh.org]  
Sent: Tuesday, July 24, 2012 3:59 PM  
To: Amy Holmes  
Cc: NorthCountryHealthConsortium  
Subject: Hepatitis C Investigation and Testing \*\* Press Release

Importance: High

NH Department of Health and Human Services  
129 Pleasant Street - Hugh Gallen State Office Park Concord, NH 03301

PRESS RELEASE

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### Public Health Officials Expand the Testing of Patients Related to the Exeter Hospital Hepatitis C Investigation

Concord, NH - The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Public Health Services (DPHS) is expanding testing recommendations related to the hepatitis C outbreak at Exeter Hospital. DPHS is now asking that anyone who was a patient in the Hospital's Operating Rooms (excluding outpatient surgery center) and the Intensive Care Unit between April 1, 2011 and May 25, 2012 be tested for possible exposure to hepatitis C. A former Exeter Hospital employee has been arrested and charged in connection with the outbreak.

"As part of our investigation we have uncovered additional information that has indicated the suspect, while working in the Hospital's Cardiac Catheterization Lab, may also have accessed these other areas of the hospital," said Public Health Director Dr. José Montero. "As we have said this investigation is ongoing and additional testing may be necessary to help all patients who may have been infected. While the risk of exposure to this newly identified group of patients is very low, we want to take every measure to protect the public and so we are recommending that they come in to be tested."

This recommendation represents approximately 6,000 people who should be tested. In order to ensure efficiency, DPHS will be coordinating clinics for testing with regional partners. The clinic will be located at Exeter High School and will be open this weekend between 10 AM and 8 PM on both Saturday and Sunday, and Monday and Tuesday between Noon and 8 PM. DPHS will offer a test that can be done at the clinic site, and patients will receive results before leaving the clinic. Understanding patient concerns, we are offering this test to shorten the time that patients will have to wait for results. Alternatively, patients can choose to have their blood drawn by their healthcare provider.

DPHS will be hosting a public meeting at 6 pm in the town of Exeter on Thursday night at Exeter High School. The purpose of the meeting is to be available for community members, to discuss the latest developments and to answer questions the public may have. Details of the clinics are being finalized, and all information will be available by Thursday night's meeting.

"We realize this is a very busy time of year," said Montero, "so we wanted to give people as much advance notice as possible. We felt it was important to reach out to patients with this announcement even before all the details have been worked out."

For questions and information about hepatitis C visit

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www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/hepatitisc/index.htm or  
www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/index.htm or call DPHS Bureau of Infectious Disease  
Control at 603-271-4496. Any inquiries about the criminal investigation  
should be addressed to the NH Attorney General's Office at 271-3658.

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