

# At Least 31 Patients Contracted Hepatitis C

## New Hampshire, USA

### August 2012

"Its reach is unprecedented, and we're the tip of the spear in the investigation. In terms of volume, scope and intensity of work involved, it's a mammoth effort"

- John P. Kacavas, the United States attorney for New Hampshire

Testing is still ongoing, but at least 31 people have contracted hepatitis C from contaminated syringes at a New Hampshire cardiac catheterization lab.

Investigators are continuing to work to understand the issues involved, but two new significant pieces of information should be added to the Cause Map.

**Cust. Service Goal Impacted**

Hundreds of people need to be tested

Hepatitis C can have severe long term consequences

Hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver transplants

Hepatitis can cause cirrhosis

AND  
Hepatitis can be treated

AND  
Hepatitis C is often asymptomatic

AND  
Other patients may have been exposed

Potential medical tech contaminated syringes at prior jobs

AND  
Medical tech has Hepatitis C

AND  
Medical tech worked in many other locations

AND  
Known contamination issues at one NH lab

**Safety Goal Impacted**

Concern for potential contamination at other facilities

AND  
He has worked in 18 hospitals in 7 other states during the last 10 years

AND  
At least 31 patients infected

AND  
Patients exposed to hepatitis C

Evidence: 31 have tested positive for same strain of hepatitis C that has been tied to contamination at the cardiac catheterization lab.

Medical tech had hepatitis C

AND  
Medical tech had access to syringes

AND  
Medical tech used the syringes

AND  
Hepatitis C is passed through blood to blood contact

AND  
Medical tech refilled and replaced syringes

?

Evidence: It's unknown when or where the medical tech originally contracted hepatitis C. There is evidence that he has a positive test in June 2010.

Possible Solutions: Keep filled syringes in secure location.

Filled syringes were not secured

Syringes filled with Fentanyl, a powerful anesthetic

Evidence: Facility records.

AND  
Medical tech was a drug addict

AND  
Attempt to cover theft of drugs

Evidence: Investigators found that the syringes were refilled with saline or other liquids so that no one was aware that the medical was injecting the Fentanyl!

Investigators have learned that the medical technician responsible for the contamination has worked in 18 hospitals in seven other states during the last 10 years. It's not known when the medical technician contracted hepatitis C, but investigators believe he had a positive test for hepatitis C in June 2010. This means that the investigation needs to be expanded and that many more people may need to be tested.

The source of the hepatitis C has been determined by investigators. Investigators found that a medical technician with hepatitis C contaminated syringes that were then used on patients. The medical technician is a drug addict who used the syringes because they were filled with Fentanyl, an anesthetic far more powerful than morphine. Hepatitis C is spread through blood to blood contact so syringes contained with hepatitis C are a major health hazard that are capable of spreading the disease. The syringes were not secured so he was able to attain them. He then used them, refilled them with saline or another liquid and replaced them without any other member of the staff noticing.

### Cause Map High Level

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