Role of the nurse practitioner in the management of patients with chronic hepatitis C

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**Purpose:** To inform nurse practitioners (NPs) of the vital role they play in recognizing patients who may have hepatitis C.

**Data sources:** Selected review of scientific literature.

**Conclusions:** NPs involved in the management of patients with chronic hepatitis C are well positioned to provide supportive care and contribute to the development of effective treatment strategies that maximize the opportunity for successful treatment outcomes. Although peginterferon alfa plus ribavirin therapy is associated with a well-described series of side effects, effective measures are available for the management of these events that permit the continuation of treatment and enhance the likelihood of attaining sustained virologic response. NPs can play a pivotal role in ensuring that these measures are in place in a preemptive manner. For example, growth factor supplementation represents an alternative to dose reduction or treatment discontinuation in selected patients with neutropenia or anemia and may help to improve treatment adherence.

**Implications for practice:** Hepatitis C is a widespread problem; approximately 3% of the global population is chronically infected with the virus. Awareness of risk factors for hepatitis C will help the NP to recognize at-risk patients, who should then be screened for the virus and referred for treatment based on specific criteria.