

Quest, CDC collaborate to improve hepatitis care, 3/15

March 2014—Quest Diagnostics will collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to identify trends in screening, diagnosis, and treatment for four strains of viral hepatitis in the U.S. Under terms of the multiyear contract, Quest will provide CDC researchers with analytics expertise and access to the company's national Health Trends database of de-identified clinical testing hepatitis data.

Medical and bioinformatics experts from Quest and the CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis will analyze de-identified test results from the Health Trends database for hepatitis A, B, C, and E viral infection in adults age 18 years and older. Analysis will include results of screening and confirmatory diagnostic tests as well as treatment-guiding genotyping and viral load tests by gender, age, geography, and type of physician. The teams will jointly develop study designs and protocols based on Quest's proprietary data-mining techniques to identify patterns in prevalence and clinical management of patients.

The new agreement is the first fee-based contract for hepatitis-related research awarded by the CDC to a diagnostic information services provider and supplants a non-fee-based agreement formed by the CDC and Quest in July 2013. Under that prior agreement, the organizations jointly analyzed de-identified hepatitis C testing data in the Health Trends database for people born between 1945 and 1965.

A primary objective of the expanded agreement is to identify and monitor trends in hepatitis B and C viral infection in pregnant women and to characterize these patients by demographics and type of physician. About 40 percent of untreated newborns infected with hepatitis B in utero will develop chronic hepatitis, and one in four of these will die from liver disease. CDC guidelines call for pregnant women to be screened with a lab test for hepatitis B, but only recommend hepatitis C screening when other risks are present. In recent years, the Division of Viral Hepatitis has partnered with Quest and others to add pregnancy status to hepatitis B lab test orders to improve surveillance of infected mothers.

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