

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 10, 2012

Contact: D. Charles Hunt, MPH, State Epidemiologist
785-296-1415

State Health Officials Provide Update in the Case of Potential Hepatitis C Exposures at Hays Medical Center

TOPEKA, Kan. – The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and Hays Medical Center have been working collaboratively to notify patients who had procedures in the cardiac catheterization laboratory from May 24, 2010, to Sept. 22, 2010, of potential exposure to hepatitis C virus (HCV).

A contract radiology technologist who had worked at Hays Medical Center during this time frame was arrested on July 19 and charged with obtaining controlled substances by fraud and tampering with a consumer product in New Hampshire. According to an affidavit filed in federal court in New Hampshire, the worker allegedly engaged in drug diversion and infected a cluster of patients with hepatitis C while employed at Exeter Hospital in New Hampshire.

On July 20, Hays Medical Center notified patients who had procedures in the cardiac catheterization laboratory from May 24, 2010, to September 22, 2010. Patients were advised of the federal charges against the former contract healthcare worker and encouraged to be tested through KDHE for hepatitis C at no charge. Testing is important to identify those patients potentially infected with HCV so they can receive appropriate medical counseling and treatment. Patients have been advised they could have their blood drawn at the Quest laboratory or Kansas Pathology Services in Hays, Kansas or their local hospital.

The initial tests are being conducted at KDHE to look for potential exposure to HCV. The New Hampshire Public Health Laboratory (NPHPL) is conducting further diagnostic testing to help guide patient care. The NPHPL and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are conducting additional tests to help make comparisons between the strain from the patients and the cluster of patients in New Hampshire. We greatly appreciate the assistance being provided by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services and CDC in this regard. This

extra testing can take several weeks to perform. It is important to note that even with the most advanced laboratory testing, results might not always provide information to conclude if patients are linked to the cluster in New Hampshire, to each other, or to any specific person.

KDHE has established a webpage with information about hepatitis C, the ongoing investigation, the laboratory testing process, and results of current laboratory testing and records review. The webpage is available at http://www.kdheks.gov/epi/hepatitisC_investigation.htm.

It is important to note that the investigation is ongoing and some information is subject to change as additional information becomes available. Key points to date include:

- In total, 474 patients were identified as having procedures in the cardiac catheterization laboratory at Hays Medical Center from May 24, 2010, to Sept. 22, 2010. This number includes at least 54 patients who have been identified as deceased from various causes prior to the current notification process and are therefore not available for new laboratory tests.
- As of August 9, 2012, 334 patients have submitted blood specimens for testing through KDHE.
- 311 patients have tested negative for HCV.
- Based on tests completed at the NPHPL, two patients have tested positive for HCV with a strain that is closely related to the cluster of patients in New Hampshire.
- For the remaining patients who have submitted blood specimens, either their laboratory tests are still in process or they have not completed epidemiologic interviews.
- KDHE will be contacting those patients who have not been tested through KDHE to determine if they have been tested outside of the process we established.

“Our highest priority at this time is to identify patients who may be infected with hepatitis C so they can receive appropriate medical care,” said Robert Moser, MD, KDHE Secretary and State Health Officer.

Hays Medical Center is contacting all patients who have been tested to explain their laboratory test results and provide recommendations for follow-up medical care as needed. In addition, Hays Medical Center is following up with any patients who have not yet sought testing.

Patients who have questions about hepatitis C or their laboratory results can contact Hays Medical Center at 877-261-7140 or KDHE at 877-427-7317.

###