First Test, Then Cure

Treating inmates with hep C before they leave prison is key to ending this epidemic in America.

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Currently, U.S. correctional facilities screen prisoners for hepatitis C virus (HCV) if inmates ask, are classified as being at risk of contracting the virus, if they consent, don't explicitly decline, or if testing is mandatory for everyone.

But should prisoners test positive for hep C under any of these policies, many institutions won't pay for the expensive treatments that can cure this blood-borne liver infection, which can lead to severe liver disease. This is in violation of the right to adequate medical care guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution's 8th Amendment.

However, recent class-action lawsuits have pressed federal judges to mandate that jails treat prisoners for hep C on a timeline, which would gradually cure thousands of inmates of the virus.

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