The Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH) receives approximately 2,500 new reports of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection each year through a system of electronic reporting by laboratories, public health providers, and physicians. Information gathered through this system is used to analyze trends and estimate the burden of HCV disease in the state.

This Epidemiologic Profile of HCV in Wisconsin provides information about the trends and distribution of HCV to assist DPH staff, local jurisdictions, community health partners and others with prioritizing and planning HCV prevention and treatment efforts. Additional information about HCV and annual data updates can be found on the DPH website (http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/ViralHepatitis/HepCInfec.htm).

A summary of the epidemiology of HCV in Wisconsin:

- As of December 2013, DPH has received 38,358 reports of HCV infection. The true number is unknown as many people who are infected are not diagnosed. Recent estimates indicate 1.3% of the United States population (or 74,000 people in Wisconsin) has an HCV infection.

- There are disparities in HCV prevalence by age. Baby boomers (born 1945-1965) account for 1 in 4 Wisconsin residents but 2 in 4 people reported and living with HCV in Wisconsin. Baby boomers account for 3 in 4 HCV-related hospitalizations, but only 1 in 4 non-HCV-related Wisconsin hospitalizations.

- There are disparities in rates of HCV detection by race. In 2013, non-Hispanic blacks (84 per 100,000) were two times and American Indians (140 per 100,000) more than three times more likely to be reported with HCV than non-Hispanic whites (37 per 100,000).

- The rise in heroin use in young people under age 30 appears to mirror the increase in reported HCV. HCV reports in people under age 30 (primarily persons who inject drugs) increased from 5% of all HCV reports in 2003 to 27% of all HCV reports in 2013. Heroin overdoses leading to emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and deaths in Wisconsin increased dramatically between 2008 and 2012. The rate of new HCV reports and the rate of heroin overdose have both increased in rural counties in the past five years.

- The age of persons with HCV infection detected at admission in Wisconsin prisons is changing. The median age of people with HCV infection reported from the Department of Corrections in 2013 is 14 years younger (median age, 30) than it was in 2009 (median age, 44).

- The number of deaths from HCV more than doubled since 2000 (73 in 2000 to 162 in 2011). Those with an HCV-associated death during 2009-2011 were 22 years younger (median age 57) than those who died of other causes (median age 79). In 2011, the rate of HCV as a cause of death in males (3.5 per 100,000) was three times the rate in females (1.1 per 100,000).

- Data from the HIV and HCV surveillance systems identified 2.3% of HCV were co-infected with HIV.