Community Matters: On the Front Lines of America's Fight Against Hepatitis

As Hepatitis Awareness Month comes to an end, remember to thank your local health department.

May 31, 2018 By Casey Halter

As Hepatitis Awareness Month comes to an end, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) has launched a media campaign reminding people how local health departments protect their communities across the country.

NACCHO, which represents nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments in the United States, supports local health departments in their efforts to address hepatitis and advocates for increased funding to address the rising incidence of hepatitis C virus (HCV).

How do state, county, city and tribal health departments help combat the crisis? They help document the epidemiology of the disease and develop information about health disparities in hepatitis care. They help vaccinate people against hepatitis A virus (HAV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV) and conduct community-targeted testing campaigns. Local health departments support access to HBV and HCV care and treatment. They help educate the public about hepatitis and collaborate with federal, state and community partners to develop elimination plans for the viruses.

Health departments also work hard to detect, investigate, respond to and minimize the risk of possible hepatitis outbreaks in the face of a growing opioid epidemic that is fueling major increases in injection drug use.

The NACCHO campaign also reminds readers and advocates that funding to address hepatitis in the United States is limited. If local health departments cannot secure sufficient funding, they will struggle to implement effective public health interventions, and efforts to prevent and treat viral hepatitis will wane.

To learn more about how to support your local health department, click here.

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