Pricey New Hep C Drugs Still Cheaper Per Cure Than Oldest Ones

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While highly expensive, treating hepatitis C virus (HCV) with the combination of Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) and Olysio (simeprevir), with or without ribavirin, is still cheaper per cure than treating with interferon and ribavirin, MedPage Today reports. Researchers analyzed data on 173 people treated with Sovaldi and Olysio, with or without ribavirin, in New York City, and presented their findings at the 2015 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Seattle.

A total of 153 of the participants (88 percent) achieved a sustained virologic response 12 weeks after completing therapy (SVR12, considered a cure). Taking ribavirin did not significantly change the outcome.

The researchers calculated that the total price to treat all 173 participants, including medications, lab testing, any treatment for side effects and fees for the clinic, was $26,185,256, or $151,360 per person. Considering that 20 people did not achieve a cure, the cost per cure was $171,145. This is well below the $189,000 cost per cure for interferon and ribavirin treatment found in previous research.

The cost per cure with the newer treatments could be considerably lower if an insurer were to secure discounts. However, this is still perhaps little consolation to insurers, considering the much higher demand for interferon-free hep C treatment, which means that the insurers are facing higher overall costs.

To read the MedPage Today story, click here.

To read the conference abstract, click here.

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