Bulk of U.S. Hepatitis C Treatment Costs Will Hit by 2020

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The United States will likely bear the brunt of the cost of treating hepatitis C virus (HCV) by 2020, after which point the financial burden will shrink considerably, aidsmap reports. Researchers made projections about treatment expenditures and presented their findings at Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) in San Francisco.

The projections were based on a model that presumed that there were about 2.7 million Americans living with hep C between 2003 and 2010. The model also assumed that successful treatment or death would reduce hep C prevalence to about 1 million by 2020. Seventy percent of those individuals are estimated to be unaware they have the virus. Also, while about 400,000 people with hep C had advanced fibrosis or cirrhosis in 2015, that figure will drop to an estimated 100,000 by 2020.

The researchers expect that hep C spending already peaked, at $21 billion in 2015, a figure that will fall to about $4 billion per year by 2020. About 80 percent of the 2015 spending, or $17 billion, went toward direct-acting antivirals (DAAs), mostly Gilead Sciences' Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) and Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir). Presumably, DAA spending will drop to $2 billion by 2020.

These may be underestimates, however, as recent research suggests that, in fact, perhaps 3.5 million to 4.6 million Americans are living with the virus.

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