Conversations From CROI 2014

Dr. Douglas Dietrich on important advances in hepatitis C.

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Dr. Douglas Dieterich and Dr. Ron Valdiserri

At the 2014 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI), Dr. Ron Valdiserri sat down for an in-depth conversation with Dr. Doug Dieterich of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, who made several presentations and was involved in scientific posters shared during the conference on hepatitis C mono-infection and HIV/HCV co-infection. Dr. Valdiserri and Dr. Dieterich discussed important advances in the diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis C that received a lot of attention at the conference.

Their conversation includes messages for primary care providers and others in the healthcare field, as well as messages for individuals at risk for or living with hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. Reminding viewers that as many as 75 percent of people living with hepatitis C in the U.S. are unaware of their infection, they discuss the recent alignment of the CDC and USPSTF HCV screening recommendations, which include a recommendation for one-time screening for all persons born between 1945 and 1965, the so-called “baby boomer” cohort.

Emphasizing that hepatitis C is curable, Drs. Dieterich and Valdiserri also discuss the rapid evolution of and improvements in HCV treatments — from peginterferon and ribavirin, an often poorly tolerated, relatively complex regimen with limited efficacy, to the oral, direct-acting antiviral (DAA) combinations available today that have simpler dosing, shorter treatment durations, and fewer side effects. These improvements in hepatitis C treatment were much discussed at CROI, both those now available and other drugs currently in the clinical trials pipeline. Dr. Dieterich even observes, “it’s a really good time to have Hepatitis C, if you have to have it, [since] we have these marvelous drugs we can treat you with right now, without side effects And this time next year, we’ll have another round of drugs available.”

Treating and curing HCV not only reduces the risk of liver disease and cancer, the doctors observe, but can also reduce the risks of other diseases and conditions exacerbated by HCV. Dr. Dieterich explains that several studies have all showed that all-cause mortality – including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and everything else – was doubled in patients who had hepatitis C. So, he observes, treating and curing hepatitis C means not only reducing the risk of liver disease, but also lowering the risk for other serious and even fatal health conditions.
View their conversation about these and other issues in this video:

For more information on the hepatitis C issues examined at CROI 2014, visit the conference website where you can search and read abstracts and view session videos.

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