# Task Force's Draft Recommendation on Hepatitis C Misses the Mark for Baby Boomers

Statement from IDSA President David A. Relman, MD, FIDSA, on U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Draft Recommendations on Hepatitis C Screening

December 17, 2012 By David A. Relman

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The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) is gravely concerned that an estimated 800,000 baby boomers may not realize they have a potentially deadly virus if draft recommendations from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force regarding screening for hepatitis C virus are adopted. The Task Force's draft is at odds with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While the CDC recently recommended that all Americans born between 1945 and 1965 be screened once for hepatitis C, the Task Force recommendations merely suggest clinicians consider screening those born during that time period. This tepid recommendation will not only influence medical practice, but it could be used by private and public insurers as a reason to limit coverage and access to screening services.

Baby boomers are five times more likely than other adults to be infected with hepatitis C but many are unaware because they often have no symptoms and can live for years without getting sick. According to CDC, 75 percent of hepatitis C infected individuals were born between 1945 and 1965.

As an organization of nearly 10,000 physicians, scientists and other health professionals devoted to patient care, prevention and public health, IDSA is acutely aware of the seriousness of infection with hepatitis C virus. About 15,000 people a year die from the disease and as many as 85 percent of the three million Americans with hepatitis C do not realize they have the infection. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent liver damage, cirrhosis and liver cancer.

IDSA implores the Task Force not to underestimate this public health opportunity to diagnose, treat and save the lives of thousands of baby boomers with hepatitis C. IDSA requests the Task Force revise its final recommendation to align with the CDC recommendation released in August that all baby boomers undergo a one-time hepatitis C screening. This approach, which is critical to identifying those who are infected and linking them to care, would save more than 120,000 lives.

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