People With Hep C May Stick With Meds Better If Care Is Personalized

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Clinicians treating people with hepatitis C virus (HCV) appear more likely to keep them adherent to the medications and motivated to persevere through side effects if they add a personal touch to care, tailoring information and feedback to specific needs, aidsmap reports. Researchers from two recent qualitative studies, one from Australia and the other from the United States, each interviewed around 20 people with hep C about their treatment experiences in order to draw these conclusions.

The Australian study involved interviews with individuals receiving care in public hospitals in Sydney. Half of the participants were taking the now-outdated treatment of interferon and ribavirin. The other half took one of the two drugs in the first-generation of hep C antivirals, Incivek (boceprevir) or Victrelis (telaprevir) along with interferon and ribavirin. Both Incivek and Victrelis have since been superseded by treatments such as Sovaldi (sofosbuvir), Olysio (simeprevir), Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir) and Viekira Pak (ombitasvir/paritaprevir/ritonavir; dasabuvir), which permit the lion's share of people to avoid interferon and its flu-like side effects, and most people to avoid ribavirin, along with its more mild but still sometimes troublesome side effects

Participants often said that fear motivated them to begin treatment for the virus; they perceived hep C as a serious health threat. Stigma also played a motivating factor, as people sought to separate themselves from a disease associated with drug use and to escape perceived societal blame of bringing a disease upon themselves.

The individuals often said they prized personal feedback from clinicians, calling such support instrumental to keeping them going through the difficult drug regimens. They said they wanted information about the disease and its treatment tailored to their needs, including the amount of information, with some preferring more information and others preferring less.

The American study involved interviews with people at a U.S. Veterans Affairs hospital near Boston. All of them were either taking or had received interferon and ribavirin treatment.

Of particular note among these participants' responses was the fact that many cited the pride of their own perseverance as a motivating factor that got them through the side effects of treatment.

They also said that they saw treatment as a key part of an overall self-improvement plan.

The American investigators concluded that even as health care providers prescribe shorter and more easily tolerated hep C treatments, they “will need deeper understandings of patients’ reasons for pursuing control of their diseases.”

The Australians echoed this stance by writing, “Adopting a patient-centered model that integrates each patient’s personal needs and life situation into their treatment program could be the next positive step in increasing adherence and completion rates for patients living with chronic hepatitis C.”

To read the American study abstract, click here.

To read the Australian study, click here.

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