Is U.S. Lagging in Hepatitis Efforts?

Nine countries are currently on track to eliminate HCV and HBV by 2030, but the United States is not among them.

March 5, 2018

More than 60 U.S. advocacy organizations have signed a letter urging President Trump and his administration to invest more money in hepatitis elimination—alleging that the country is lagging in its quest to end its hepatitis C virus (HCV) and hepatitis B virus (HBV) epidemics by 2030.

The letter specifically asks Trump to invest in the Department of Health and Human Services' National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan and commit in both words and deeds to the elimination of HCV and HBV in the United States by 2030, which the World Health Organization originally established as a goal.

Nine countries—Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Japan, the Netherlands and Qatar—are currently on track to achieve this milestone; however, the United States, one of the richest countries in the world, is not among them. No new resources have yet been allocated at the national level to combat viral liver disease in this country.

A recent budget report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended that the government commit $308 million for fiscal year 2018 to meet the goals set by the National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan. However, the Division of Viral Hepatitis's current funding stands at only $34 million.

The letter also suggests establishing a coordinated elimination effort at the highest levels of the government; opening up access to harm reduction programs, such as syringe exchanges and medication-assisted treatment for opioid users; and improving insurance coverage for hepatitis care.

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