Using the “Netflix Model” to Pay for Hepatitis C Treatment

Louisiana health officials are adopting the country’s first subscription model for hep C cures.

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Last week, Louisiana health officials announced that the state is adopting the first so-called Netflix payment model for hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment, The Washington Post reports.

The aim? To dramatically increase access to lifesaving cures. The means? Asking state lawmakers to pay a subscription fee to a single pharmaceutical company for unlimited access to the direct-acting antivirals that can cure the virus—similar to the way consumers pay a monthly fee to stream unlimited entertainment.

Louisiana is the first state to adopt this payment model. If successful, lawmakers hope the system will be replicated across the country.

Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards is actively soliciting drug companies to submit bids for a statewide contract, in the hopes of securing a deal by July 2019. Under the new system, the state aims to treat 10,000 people with hepatitis C by 2020, about 25 percent of those with hep C currently on Medicaid or in prison. That’s compared with the just 1,000 people Louisiana treated last year at a cost of nearly $35 million.

Which company will take the deal remains unclear. Last year, Gilead Sciences told Louisiana lawmakers that it was “eager to consider a subscription payment model.” Competitor AbbVie also expressed general support for the state’s effort to eliminate hepatitis C.

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