Scientists Predict Hep C Will Be Rare by 2036, Advocates Disagree

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A new report in the Annals of Internal Medicine suggests that hepatitis C could be a rare disease in the United States as soon as 2036, thanks to new game-changing cures and the latest government push for all baby boomers to get tested for the virus, Healthline.com reports.

Computer models built by health economists and physicians across the country show that simply testing 91 percent of the population born between 1945 and 1965 could help identify nearly 500,000 people currently living with hep C. The report also assumed that 80 percent of those who tested positive for hepatitis C would begin treatment to cure the disease. In practice, researchers say, the efforts could effectively wipe out the virus among a large swath of the U.S. population.

However, many hep C advocates say that such optimistic assumptions are unrealistic. They fear that the report vastly underestimated the number of Americans actually living with hep C, leaving out the entire U.S. prison population and overlooking young people and injection drug users living with the disease.

Advocates also said that, because of stigma and a lack of education about the disease, physicians and patients are not currently testing for hepatitis C at high enough rates to fulfill the estimates. Experts also called into question how many people would ultimately have access to the expensive life-saving therapies.

To read the full HealthLine report, click here.

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