Thoughts about the 2015 Liver Meeting

November 20, 2015 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

On Monday's blog, I will list my favorite research presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD). I devote today's blog to the events that were most meaningful to me.

Event #1: A rally protesting Gilead's lack of medication coverage for all high risk hep C patients. The rally was spirited and managed to get a bit of media coverage. My favorite battle cries were, "No more baloney, give us Harvoni" and "Public health not corporate wealth." I especially appreciated when physicians came up to us and said they were on our side, or gave the "thumbs up" sign.

Event #2: A second rally urged physicians to be advocates for treating all people with hepatitis C, in other words, to following the HCV Guidelines. I never thought I'd see the day when I'd have a megaphone in my hand, declaring, "Providers are the key for testing hepatitis C." It is worth noting, that providers also attended these rallies.

Event #3: Project Inform and five other hepatitis advocacy organizations hosted a gathering of stakeholders titled, "Beyond the Walls of the Clinic: The Importance of Collaboration with Community Organizations to Address Viral Hepatitis." This gathering of providers and community advocates discussed building partnerships to increase access to vital services and health care.

It was amazing to be in the company of the many advocates from across the country. The tragedy is that we had reason to be there in the first place. Gilead and other pharmaceutical companies have developed cures for hepatitis C. We should be celebrating that, rather than protesting the fact that many patients cannot get access to hepatitis C treatment. We are really all on the same side, trying to eradicate hep C. We shouldn't be fighting each other; we should be working together. Perhaps our efforts will make a difference.

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