Access to Hepatitis C Treatment Is STILL a Problem

September 17, 2018 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

There is a cure for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection, which creates the impression that hepatitis C is gone. Couple this with our own experiences. For instance, now that you are cured of hepatitis C, are you feeling the need to put this disease behind you? Do you think, “Now that I am cured, it’s just a matter of time before everyone is.” Do you ignore the call to increase awareness, to act, to change, and to help in the efforts to eliminate hepatitis C? If so, you may have a case of complacency.

Merriam-Webster defines complacency as:

1. self-satisfaction especially when accompanied by unawareness of actual dangers or deficiencies; When it comes to safety, complacency can be dangerous. [emphasis mine]
2. an instance of usually unaware or uninformed self-satisfaction

“When it comes to safety, complacency can be dangerous.” That is a powerful statement, one that can easily apply to hepatitis C. Complacency can take hold of us, preventing us from continuing to apply constant effort towards the elimination of hep C.

Let’s look at some facts.

- The number of new cases of HCV are steadily increasing, largely due to the opioid epidemic. Since 2010, the number of reported cases of acute hepatitis C virus infection increased about 3.5-fold. The CDC estimates that there were 41,200 new hep C cases in 2016. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) V. Chirikov and colleagues report that the number of HCV RNA-positive patients increased from 200,066 patients in 2013 to 469,550 in 2016. (Development of a Comprehensive Dataset of Hepatitis C Patients and Examination of Disease Epidemiology in the United States, 2013–2016; Advances in Therapy; July 2018)
- Chronic HCV infection accounted for more than 18,000 deaths in 2016 in the United States. Beginning in 2013, the number of deaths related to hepatitis C exceeded the total number of deaths from all 60 other infectious diseases combined. (Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention)

- More than a third of patients were denied hep C treatment by their insurers. (Absolute Insurer Denial of Direct-Acting Antiviral Therapy for Hepatitis C: A National Specialty Pharmacy Cohort Study by C. Gowda, et al. Open Forum Infectious Diseases; June 2018)
- A large percentage of people with hepatitis C have yet to be tested for it. The CDC states that up to 75 percent of people with HCV are unaware of it.

These facts show why complacency can be dangerous. The current trend in hep C shows that it's on a clear path of destruction of human life. It's like watching reports about hurricanes coming towards us and hoping the storm will change direction. The difference is, hurricanes might change direction, but hepatitis C will stay the course.

The one thing that we have control over is our own level of involvement. What you doing to help eliminate hepatitis C?

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