Coverage of the 2015 Liver Meeting

November 15, 2015 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Yesterday's rally to protest Gilead's recent restrictions on medication coverage was spirited. It is powerful to be unified in a single, reasonable demand to make health care accessible to everyone. I have no problem with Gilead making a profit on their drugs. I get it that profit may equal motivation and innovation. But profit and greed are not the same. Personally, I profit by people getting treated, because it feels so damn good to hear, "I am cured!" and so horrible when they die. I profited from hep C treatment because I am cured. But I refuse to own Gilead stock. I wouldn't mind being rich, but not if it means stepping on the backs of those who are suffering.

Speaking of treatment, the presentations at the liver meeting are the best I've seen in a long time. Here's one that I thought was especially interesting:

Abstract #151 The Cost of Making Hepatitis C a Rare Disease in the United States - Jagpreet Chhatwal, et al.

The study objectives were to project the annual cost of hepatitis C in the United States, and estimate the much it would cost to make it a rare disease.

The researchers found, *"The annual cost of HCV in 2010 was $7 billion (before DAAs), peaked to $18 billion in 2015, and is projected to decline sharply. By 2022, the annual HCV treatment cost would drop below $1.8 billion, and by 2030 the availability of generics would bring the cost of treatment below $14 million. Because of the aging population, Medicare would bear the maximum cost burden (39% of total) from 2017 onwards. Under the current HCV management policies, it would cost $104 billion to make HCV a rare disease by 2040s."*

It seems to me that we'd like to treat as many people now, before they become Medicare's responsibility. But, the idea of making hepatitis C a rare disease is scrumptious. I could live to see this.

I'm off to another rally, this one to urge physicians to be advocates for treating all people with hepatitis C, in other words, to follow the HCV Guidelines.

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