Creating a World Free From Hepatitis C

January 2, 2013 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

The year is still fresh--only two days into it and I haven't managed to muck it up. Looking deep into my heart (yes, despite my adoration of the liver, I search my heart first), I wonder how I will make a difference. What part will I play in creating a world free from hepatitis C?

This is no idle question. I believe it is possible to eradicate this virus. Not today, not tomorrow, but thousands of days from now, all built on how I act, we act, today. Small pox was wiped out. Polio was nearly so and its end is within grasp. Guinea worm disease, a disease so hideous it is hard to think about, has dropped from 3.5 million cases in 21 countries in 1986 to less than 1800 cases. If progress can be made with these, then why not hepatitis C? I am not naÃ¯ve. I know that there are 170 million people worldwide with hepatitis C viral (HCV) infection and 350,000 die from it every year. Nevertheless, here is the thing--why not try anyway? Even one less death matters.

There is a huge opportunity to knock hep C to its knees and there is no better time to act than now. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) officially recommended a one-time HCV test for all Baby Boomers (born from 1945 to 1965). Rapid HCV-antibody testing is available, enabling us to reach the 75% of the population who do not know they have HCV. Effective treatment is available for those with insurance or other means of access, such as with patient assistance programs. In a year, the Affordable Healthcare Act will help millions of Americans. The U.S. Congress has at least two HCV-related bills on the docket. At least one brave Congressional leader, Hank Johnson of Georgia, has publicly discussed his own HCV-status and successful treatment. Surely there are other leaders with this disease, or with loved ones who are infected.

So, why not try to make a difference? I know a blog isn't going to change the world. It can however, start a conversation, one that has been happening for decades. I am simply extending an invitation. What are you doing to help create a world free from hepatitis C?

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