Freedom from Hepatitis C

June 30, 2014 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

I have been free from hepatitis C for more than a year. I am in the minority, since the most people with hepatitis C do not even know they are infected, let alone are cured. This means that millions are living with a potentially deadly and infectious virus that may be robbing them of their precious health. They tragedy is that it can also infect others.

Freedom is an amazing gift, a gift that I don't take for granted. I worked hard to be free of hepatitis C, and now that I have a taste of freedom, I wish it for others. Freedom didn't just happen; it takes effort. Democracy in the U.S. was earned by the willingness to die for freedom. The founders of the U.S. didn't just sit back and demand freedom or take pot shots at the press. They did something.

What are you doing to secure the freedom for those who are infected with hepatitis C? I am not talking about theoretically. I mean, what are you actually doing? Imagine if Paul Revere decided it was too cold out the night of his famous ride, or had hoped that someone else would sound the alarm, or he was just too tired. Fortunately, Revere rose to the occasion, and his efforts, along with many others are why we get to celebrate our independence on July 4.

Now we are fighting for freedom to be healthy. The CDC estimates that up to 75% of Americans with hepatitis C do not know they have it. You can help, and you don't need to ride through the streets shouting, "Hepatitis C is here, hepatitis C is here." A simple phone call is a good place to start. Ask your U.S. Representative to cosponsor H.R. 3723, the Viral Hepatitis Testing Act. This legislation would authorize $80 million over three years to expand targeted hepatitis B and C testing and linkage to care services. Passage of this legislation would increase the number of people who know they have chronic hepatitis B or C.

To help move H.R. 3723 forward, call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to your representative's office. If you don't know who is your representative, look up your congressperson at the House of Representatives.

Ask to speak to the staff person who handles health care issues. Whether you speak to that person live or leave a message, tell him/her : "My name is _____ and I live in (city/state). I would like Representative _____ to cosponsor H.R. 3723, the Viral Hepatitis Testing Act. This bill would authorize badly needed funding for hepatitis B and C testing and linkage to care services. Please contact Robb Walton in Representative Bill Cassidy's office for more information or to sign as a cosponsor."

If you are part of an organization, here is information about how to endorse the Viral Hepatitis Testing Act by signing a letter.

Do this today. Don’t let freedom get lost in the hot dogs and fireworks this July 4th.

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