Hep C Advocate Groups: Who is Advocating for What?

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As I have mentioned before,some of the large Hep C advocacy groups receive significant, sometimes massive, funding from the big drug companies.

So it is no surprise to see some of these groups pushing the fear campaigns against people accessing affordable Indian Generic medicines.

An example of the anti-generics/anti-India push is found in an article published on the Hepatitis C website.

Medical Tourism isn't a solution to getting treatment for Hepatitis C

The logic of this article, by Rick Nash, is so full of errors and flaws it is either incredibly naive or deliberately constructed to bamboozle people. The article appears to claim that if people from Western countries go to India to get affordable Hep C medication this somehow limits local peoples access to the drugs. This is complete nonsense. It is like saying if I go to India and buy a T shirt that means a local person will miss out on a T shirt. The reality is that there is a local market and a market for tourists and people will make T shirts for the tourist market and T shirts for the local market and they will be different prices.

There are seven licensed manufacturers of Sofosbuvir in India, they can produce as much Sofosbuvir as they like and sell it in at least 100 countries, including India. There is no limit to the amount of Sofosbuvir these companies can make. Then there are the unlicensed manufacturers who can make Sofosbuvir legally in India because it is not covered by patents. They can also make as much as they want and sell at what ever price they want.

Then Rick pushes the fear barrow, big time, he claims that a person is breaking the law if he or she imports medication for personal use. This is also untrue. He claims that such a person might face jail of massive fines. Again untrue.

The US law code he quotes is Title 21, 333 Penalties. I just spent an hour studying this code and it has nothing what so ever to do with the importation of generic medicines from another country for personal use. Either Rick has not taken the time to read the relevant sections of the code or he

has misunderstood them or he is being misinformed by a third party.

So this article appears to be another example of people or organizations attempting to dissuade people from going to India to get affordable and effective treatment for their Hep C. As I have been to India as a medical tourist only ten weeks ago with profoundly pleasing results I find it both astounding and distressing that such a poorly informed and inaccurate article could come from an organisation purporting to be advocating for and on behalf of people infected with Hep C.

I should also add that since I have returned from India I have helped people from third world countries like Venezuela, Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, China, Panama, Africa as well as low income countries such as Romania and other Eastern European countries to access these generic Hep C medications. I have helped them by giving them the contact details of honest, reliable suppliers who will supply at a fair price. With this information people can either go to India and buy themselves or get the meds couriered to their home. Whichever suits them better. Rick should also note that in most countries on Earth this is completely legal. There are only seven countries that completely prohibit their citizens from bringing in their own medication and the USA is not one of those.

I ask again “Who are these people really advocating for?”
(After such a rant I should end by saying that the majority of Hep C advocates and advocacy groups are highly ethical and really doing a fantastic job advocating for people suffering from Hep C.)

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