Hep C in the Phillipines

The low wages and high cost of a viral load test means that very few Filipinos can afford a viral load test or genotype test.

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There are two big problems for people who have hep C in the Philippines, one is the cost of the hep C medication and the other is the stigma associated with having hepatitis C.

In this post I would like to share the story of a young man from the Philippines who caught hep C when he was in his teens, probably from a blood transfusion. He found out he had hep C when he went to the doctor with extreme fatigue and pain in the area of his liver.

For the purpose of this story, I will call him Henri.

Henri's hep C diagnosis was based on his symptoms and a hepatitis C antibody test.

He is now in his 30's and works as a laborer in the construction industry for a basic wage of less than US$50 per week. The hep C induced fatigue makes manual labor very difficult for him but there is no social safety net in the Philippines, he must work or his family will starve.

A hep C viral load test costs about US$120 in the Philippines whereas a HCV antibody test costs only a few dollars. Getting a viral load test is completely out of the question for Henri because he supports his family with just enough money to cover their basic needs from week to week.

The low wages and high cost of a viral load test means that very few Filipinos can afford a viral load test or genotype test. So the combination of a hep C antibody test + symptoms is the normal route for hep C infection diagnosis.

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