Hepatitis Awareness: Applying the Word ‘Syndemic’

May 22, 2018 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

The word “syndemic” applies when two or more concurrent or sequential epidemics interact in a population, and aggravate the prognosis and burden of disease. The viral hepatitis epidemic and the opioid crisis is an example of a syndemic. For a while, the rate of new hepatitis C cases was steadily declining. However, with the increasing opioid epidemic, the hep C rate has been increasing swiftly.

Opioid use and viral hepatitis are inseparable. Fix one and we get closer to fixing both. Fix both and we fix more than that – lives are saved, families are restored, and communities are revived. Hope will come sweeping in like a healing salve.

To address this, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released “Managing HIV and Hepatitis C Outbreaks Among People Who Inject Drugs: A Guide for State and Local Health Departments.” Click here to learn more about it.

Want to know more? Read Dr. Brett Giroir’s address on the Infectious Disease and Opioid Crisis, delivered at a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine workshop.

We can make a difference and make this syndemic go away. Tweet @hepatitismag about ways you are observing Hepatitis Awareness Month, and causing this syndemic to vanish.

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