Hepatitis: Bad News, Good News

December 3, 2018 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

World AIDS Day was this past Saturday. World AIDS Day was the first ever global health day, held for the first time in 1988. It's my annual reminder to look at how far we've come with HIV and other infectious diseases and to look at how far we need to go.

When I consider viral hepatitis, I get discouraged. Yes, the viral hepatitis world has made great strides over the years. However, lately there have been some setbacks. Also, there are some areas that aren't moving quickly enough. Let's take a look at some recent news. I'll start with the bad and get that off my chest.

Bad News…

- Hong Kong Reports World's Second Case of Rat Hepatitis E in Humans Seriously? Are we looking at a future dealing with an increased prevalence o hepatitis E? Rats have friends. A third rat is probably already out there.
- Suits Allege Kansas City VA Hospital Could Have Prevented Hep C Patients' Deaths This one is really depressing.
- In Prisons, CDC-Advised Hep C Testing Protocol Misses Many Cases Just how difficult is it to follow these protocols!

Both Good and Bad News…

- State Medicaid Programs Continue to Expand Access to Hep C Treatment I am glad this is improving, but until all the states provide complete access to hepatitis C treatment, I deem this incredibly unjust and inhumane (and ridiculously short-sighted).

Good News…

- Another Study Finds Transplanting Hep C–Infected Organs Is Safe This is fabulous news for the more than 114,000 people on various organ transplant lists. Approximately 20 people die every day while waiting for an organ. (Don't forget to register as a potential donor.) Now if we could

do something about the blood donor rules…

- Treating Hepatitis C Reduces Risk of Cardiovascular Disease This doesn't need any explanation or comments.
- Marijuana Use Tied to Lower Cirrhosis Rate in Those With Hep C Good news for the livers of cannabis users. It's great to have a bit of evidence that provides something positive about using marijuana. Now if science finds that it helps with memory issues, I'd be really celebrating. Unfortunately, we don't know enough about the potential risks or benefits of marijuana use.
- Study: Shortening Hepatitis C Treatment Feasible in Half of Patients Shorter treatments means lower expenses and fewer side effects. This is great news. To read more about this, click here.

Someday, perhaps we won't need a day to remind us about the health problems and injustices we have. In the meantime, let's keep chiseling away at the problem.

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