When Hepatitis C Makes the Headlines

September 5, 2016 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

Truth in advertising: I want you to read my blog. If I was a good blogger, I'd write a very provocative headline, such as: "Hepatitis C Headlines May be Dangerous to Your Health." Fortunately for you (but not for me), I am a garden-variety blogger who writes mediocre headlines. Plus, my conscience would rather write a true, but boring headline rather than entice you with something sensational.

Still, I am amazed at the power of headlines. For instance, I saw this one: "Researchers find possible link between marijuana, HCV." Doesn't that sound interesting! What is this mysterious link? Does marijuana use help hepatitis C? Make it worse?

Well, the researchers found an association between marijuana use and hepatitis C status. They thought it might indicate that marijuana is a gateway drug. Seriously? I think they should study how many people with hep C skipped school and see if truancy is a gateway behavior for drug use.

The bottom line is that just because a researcher can make an association, doesn't mean that there is one. Also, association is not causation.

This Labor Day, I hope you don't have to labor over the real meaning of the words behind the hepatitis C headlines. That gives me an idea for a headline: "Hepatitis C Expert Issues Labor Day Warning About Headlines!"

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