#Just B Storytelling Campaign Increasing Awareness of HBV Co-infection in People Living with HIV

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People with HIV are often coinfected with viral hepatitis. In fact, one in ten persons who have been diagnosed with HIV are coinfected with hepatitis B (HBV). Because of this, the National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan has designated people with HIV/HBV coinfection as one of its priority populations for HBV prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. For people coinfected with HIV/HBV, HBV has also been shown to advance more quickly to cirrhosis, end-stage liver disease, and liver cancer compared to people who have HBV infection only.

For these reasons, everyone who has HIV should be screened for HBV. Testing can detect HBV infection, even if a person has no symptoms of the disease. There are several blood tests that can determine a person's HBV status. It is important that people with HIV/HBV coinfection be treated for both infections. Treatment for HBV is very similar to that for HIV. In fact, some HIV medications are effective at treating both HIV and HBV. Individuals looking to find out their HBV status or be treated for their HBV/HIV coinfection should work with their healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate diagnostic test and medications.

One important way to share information about HIV/HBV coinfection is to share personal stories about real people who are grappling with or have overcome challenges related to these chronic diseases. Stories like those described below can help give hope and motivate people to be tested and treated for hepatitis B.

#JustB Stories

In May 2017, the Hepatitis B Foundation launched the #justB Storytelling Campaign to raise public attention about HBV, including those coinfected with HIV/HBV. Today, the campaign continues to highlight the personal stories of people affected by HBV. These stories are essential to raise awareness, lower stigma about infection, and get more people tested. Below are a couple stories we'd like to highlight from the campaign.

Jason, who is coinfected with HIV, talks about his HBV diagnosis and his struggle to find a

healthcare provider in his hometown who knew how to treat HBV. Jason remained proactive until he located a caring and knowledgeable doctor who gave him hope. He now encourages others to be aware of their condition and keep fighting until they find a caring, knowledgeable provider that can help treat one's HBV infection. Today, Jason educates high school students about HBV and HIV.

To hear Jason's story go to:
http://www.hepb.org/research-and-programs/patient-story-telling-project/jason/

Binh tells the story of how he learned he had HBV during a routine STD check up, but put off treatment because he felt healthy. Several years later, his roommate suggested he consider Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), which is a pill that can help prevent HIV infection. This push helped him get into treatment, as he learned during the appointment that his HBV viral load was very high. His story highlights the need for advocacy and increasing awareness around HBV testing, treatment, and education.

To hear Binh's story go to:
http://www.hepb.org/research-and-programs/patient-story-telling-project/binhs-story-justb-an-advocate/

To learn more, get involved, or submit your story, visit the Hepatitis B Foundation's website at www.hepb.org/justb

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1 in 10 persons who have been diagnosed with #HIV are coinfected with #hepB. Read more about the @HepBFoundation #justB stories raising awareness of HBV co-infection: https://go.usa.gov/xUmtf

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