



# NVHR Announces New Advisory Committee and Policy Manager

Patients, clinicians and advocates with lived or professional experience will help guide the fight against U.S. viral hepatitis.

July 17, 2020 By [NVHR](#)

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The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable ([NVHR](#)), a national coalition working to eliminate viral hepatitis, today announced the establishment of a new advisory committee and the appointment of a new policy manager to help provide additional guidance and direction for the organization.

These new appointments are critical components of NVHR's strategic plan as a program of the Hepatitis Education Project ([HEP](#)), and the organization's renewed commitment to advocate for viral hepatitis elimination in the U.S. that prioritizes disproportionately impacted communities.

The [advisory committee](#) is composed of eight individuals with lived or professional experience with viral hepatitis and who have demonstrated commitment to health equity, harm reduction, and inclusivity. Additionally, many of the members have long advocated for greater access to hepatitis testing, treatment, and vaccination. The members include:

- Alicia Suarez, PhD, Professor & Medical Sociologist at Depauw University. Hepatitis C survivor and advocate.
- Bright Ansah, Hepatitis B advocate and volunteer with Hepatitis B Initiative of Washington, D.C., and the Hepatitis B Foundation. Student at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, majoring in Social Work & Sociology.
- Jessica Ento, hepatitis C survivor and NVHR patient advocate.
- Jessica Leston, Clinical Programs Director the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB).
- Navin Vij, MD, MSHP, Physician Scientist in the Value Institute and an Academic Hospitalist at ChristianaCare.
- Nick Voyles, Program Manager at the Indiana Recovery Alliance, hepatitis C survivor, and NVHR

patient advocate.

- Rachel McLean, MPH, Chief of the Office of Viral Hepatitis Prevention for the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).
- Robert Gish, MD, Adjunct Professor of Medicine at the University of Nevada Schools of Medicine in Las Vegas and in Reno.

NVHR is also appointing [Dr. Adrienne Simmons](#) as policy manager to grow NVHR's grassroots advocacy efforts and public health policy development. Dr. Simmons will be responsible for coordinating all policy activities, with an emphasis on managing educational efforts with policymakers and identifying advocacy opportunities for NVHR members. Dr. Simmons joins NVHR after two years of pharmacy residency training at UNC Medical Center where she gained clinical and administrative experience in hepatology, HIV, medication access, and 340B.

In addition to her pharmacological experience, Dr. Simmons has experience in federal and state legislative advocacy in harm reduction and expanding access to health care services. She also has professional advocacy experience in mental health and has served on national policy committees for the American Pharmacists Association and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. Dr. Simmons looks forward to using her experience as a pharmacist and advocate to amplify the voices of marginalized communities and improve the lives of those impacted by viral hepatitis.

"Viral hepatitis affects an estimated 5 million Americans, and elimination efforts are at a critical juncture if we are to meet our stated goal of eliminating the diseases by 2030. Our new advisory committee and Dr. Adrienne Simmons will ensure that NVHR leads the fight for elimination, while working to increase access to hepatitis testing, treatment and vaccination," said Michael Ninburg, Executive Director of HEP. "We are thrilled to have the additional experience and leadership of the advisory committee and Adrienne at NVHR."

Over the last year, the transition of NVHR into a program of HEP and the growth of grassroots advocacy was guided by NVHR Director Lauren Canary. In part because of her experience working with NVHR members and patient and provider advocates, Ms. Canary is stepping down as Director to attend medical school at Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine. While she will no longer be involved in day-to-day operations of the organization, Ms. Canary will continue her involvement as an advocate and member of NVHR.

"NVHR is in a stronger position today because of all of the work that Lauren has done over the last year and more. Her departure is bittersweet for all of us at NVHR and HEP, but we're excited for the opportunity she has and look forward to engaging with her as a clinician advocate in the future," added Ninburg. "NVHR is undergoing a search for a fulltime Director who will continue growing the organization and we look forward to announcing the new leadership soon."

For more information about viral hepatitis, the new advisory committee, and our new policy

manager, please visit [www.nvhr.org](http://www.nvhr.org).

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