NVHR and Hep C in the USA

March 8, 2020 By Greg Jefferys

Because of a discussion that came up in our group, I would like to clarify my position on the NVHR (National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable) a USA-based organisation.

Firstly, I want to make clear that I am not trying to pick a fight with the NVHR, and I am sure that there are good people in the NVHR who are genuinely trying to help people with viral hepatitis; however, here I must quote Jesus, Matthew 6:24:

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Over the years I have written to the NVHR to ask them to make people aware that the Gilead-licensed generic hepatitis C medications made in India are a cheap and effective option for people in the USA without health insurance or whose health insurance has declined hepatitis C treatment.

An Email the NVHR Ignored

I have written to the NVHR several times about the option of people accessing hepatitis C treatment using Indian generic DAAs but they have never replied to me. Here is an example of one email to the NVHR, another example is at the bottom of the page.

Hi Molly,

Thanks for sharing this.

I would like to make the comment that your organisation would help a lot more people if it increased awareness of the option of buying Gildead-licensed generic treatments for individuals with hepatitis C.

Given that the major obstacle to accessing treatment is the high cost of “brand” DAAs in the USA if people were aware that they could legally buy licensed generic DAAs from outside the USA for around US$500 for a 12-week treatment that would see a LOT more people getting treatment.

It seems very strange that your organisation completely ignores this option.

Best wishes,

Greg Jefferys

The reason that the NVHR are not interested in telling people about the generic hepatitis C treatment option, the reason that they will not talk with me, is simply because the NVHR is mostly sponsored by Big Pharma + Big Pathology.

As you see from the page on the NVHR website copied below, the bulk of the NVHR funding comes from Big Pharma. Their pay packets come from Big Pharma.

The NVHR is a Big Pharma funded “advocacy” organization that purports to lobby for better access to treatment for people in the USA with Hepatitis C but actually advocates for its Paymaster… Big Pharma

Big Pharma Controls Global Hep C Advocacy

Like the World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA; also 100% sponsored by Big Pharma) the NVHR does not work first and foremost for the best outcomes for people with hepatitis C—this is secondary.

The NVHR works for the best outcomes for Big Pharma and if some people with hepatitis C get a benefit in the process, well that’s a secondary benefit. When the choice is between what is best for people with hep C and what is best for Big Pharma, Big Pharma always wins.

Big Pharma uses groups like the WHA and the NVHR as lobbyists to advocate governments for increased funding for hep C medications, not cheaper hep C medications. When governments divert limited health funding to paying the huge prices for Mavyret, Epclusa and Harvoni funding is removed from areas of health that do not have highly funded lobby groups, for example from emergency or maternity services.

Health budgets around the world are always under stress; when funds are diverted to buying overpriced hep C medication then the rest of the health budget is depleted.

I am sure that there are good people in the NVHR who do good things and who are trying to help people with hep C; however, the reality is that Big Pharma pays the wages and therefore dictates the policies.

The fact that there is no mention, advice or guidance on the subject of cheap generic hepatitis C medication from India on the NVHR’s website or its literature is the most obvious evidence that Big Pharma pulls the strings at the NVHR.

The NCHR could simply put up information about generic hep C medication, with links to reliable suppliers and maybe some links to peer-reviewed articles about hep C generics in science journals.

Instead, the NVHR does not tell people about the cheap generic treatment options for hep C, but funnels eligible people into government-funded programs that ensure that Big Pharma gets its Big Money.

It is smoke and mirrors and a very classic deception using proxies masquerading as charitable organisations but who are actually pawns of Big Pharma.

This sad deception is practiced across the entire world and is one of the many ways that Big Pharma keeps control of the hep C market.

My Letter to the NVHR
I wrote the letter below to the NVHR explaining my position of hepatitis C medication and putting it to them that, if they are genuinely concerned about helping people in the USA to access hepatitis C treatment, then they should also include information about the option of getting generic hepatitis C medicine from India.

Another email that the NVHR never replied to:

Hi Tina,

Thanks for taking the time to answer my questions so comprehensively.

Whilst my concerns are of a global nature at least half of the inquiries I get about generic hep C treatments come from the USA, so I have an intimate understanding of the angst and suffering that many people in the USA go through trying to access hep C treatment.

There are many levels to this, some are people who have health insurance but are not granted access to treatment because access is triaged.

Others have health insurance that does not cover hep C treatment.

Others have no insurance.

My position is that increasing awareness about access to generic treatment solves many problems. Firstly, for most people, there is an affordable generic option. For example, a 12-week treatment with Sofosbuvir + Daclatasvir costs only US$550 and if a person indicates that they have financial hardship I will reduce that price to below my cost and sell for US$360, which most people can afford.

Secondly, if more people begin accessing generic treatment it puts massive pressure on the big pharmaceutical companies to reduce their prices.

In Australia we brought the effective price per treatment charged by Gilead for Harvoni down to around US$6,000. This was the result of a massive media campaign creating awareness of generic hep C treatments.

In Italy the national health service there pays less than $10,000 per treatment because generics were flooding into Italy.

So whilst the work your group is doing is great it is my belief that it is only when Big Pharma is threatened by genuine competition from generic medicines priced at a level that actually reflects the cost of the product that things will change.

As you may know, a treatment of 12 weeks of Harvoni costs less than $40 to manufacture, including packaging etc. So Gilead could sell Harvoni at $2,000 and still make a great profit.

It is my hope to see a 12-week treatment with Sof + Dac or some other DAA combination retailing all around the world for under $300 within the next 12 months. Indeed all my energy is focused on that outcome.

Only then will we see Big Pharma come to the table with realistic prices that will allow all health insurance companies in the USA to give treatment to all their clients.

Best wishes

Greg

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