Politics Over Patients

October 19, 2017 By Carleen McGuffey

So fantastic to see so many Hepatitis-C advocates in the same room. These folks are all members of The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable. I too am a member.

I'd like to appeal to the NVHR and any other Hep-C groups to focus on the 5 million Americans who are daily discriminated against because of Hepatitis-C instead of taking controversial political stances.

The whole taking a knee thing is a divisive political issue that alienates EVERYONE. Left, right, and center. That's because EVERYONE cares deeply about either, the flag, social issues, football, patriotism, or some other deeply held conviction. While taking, or not taking a knee means one thing to one person it means something completely different to another. It may mean racial discrimination to one, while it means blatant disrespect for the men who have fought and died for our country to another. See?

It's divisive, that is why we, as a Hepatitis-C community should avoid political issues. They divide. Every time. We aren't a political party. We love both Republicans with Hep-C and Democrats with Hep-C. We need both sides to vote, show up, advocate, and work to end this epidemic. If we allow our political views to dictate our advocacy, memberships, and agenda, we are no longer a Hep-C group....we become a political group.

I am well aware that my public stance here will result in alot of murmurings about how we don't love vulnerable, forgotten groups of people. I'm secure. I know that we have spent more time, money and passion to serve and fight for communities disproportionately impacted by Hepatitis-C than any of my accusers ever will. Murmur away...

We hang out with people who are at the highest risk and with the highest prevalence of Hepatitis-C. We intentionally focus on forgotten communities. We serve anywhere we feel like this virus may be most prominent. We take the time and spend the money to dispel the stigma, offer and administer free hep-c testing, connect clients to medicine, promote organ donation, educate, and love on people across this country, in particular, humans who are poor, marginalized, forgotten or discriminated against.

We don't allow personal feelings, politics, preferences, prejudices, or self-importance to dictate or trump our advocacy efforts. When we make a political statement while disregarding the potential alienation of advocates, patients, providers, and legislatures who may help to eradicate this epidemic, we place our own personal agenda over the importance of patients, and the relief of

suffering. That isn't advocacy, its selfishness.

We need to be so laser-focused on this virus that we want to recruit and welcome any and EVERYONE who will fight. Shoulder to shoulder. Being inclusive and tolerant isn't a one-way street. We have to embrace the right, left, moderate, and neutral in order to see the greatest relief of suffering.

Our own personal agenda should be second to our objective to eradicate this virus. When we place that NVHR hat on our head we have to use wisdom not feelings. Wisdom knows that politics and religion unrelated to Hep-C are divisive.

I took a look at NVHR's website, staff, donors, steering committee, voting members....that must include 5,000 people or more represented. I know some of them must be Conservatives, Muslims, Jews, Old Veterans, Asians, Republicans, Christians, Foreigners, Libertarians, and then there are people like me who are just completely sick and tired of politics, rhetoric, agendas, false accusations, fake news, and sensational reporting etc.

I am, in my heart, pretty much a one issue voter at this point in my life. I am sold out to this Hepatitis advocacy thing. When I attend times of advocacy in DC I study and consider my appointments politics regarding Hep-C/healthcare and strategize my appeal to see the most people healed, cured, and relieved of their suffering. I stuff my politics, feelings and personal agenda in favor of my clients, AND COMRADES. I work hard not to offend the advocate beside me, as should all of us.

Advocates are a precious commodity in this fight. They are few and far between. I can test 1000 but if I ensure my fellow advocates are strong, healthy and guided by the objective to relieve suffering I know I can impact 10s of thousands.

See how unity produces healing?

We gotta understand that when we post political statements about administrations, Trump, politics, taking a knee, social issues, and other politics unrelated to Hep-C it will surely alienate and piss off a few of the people represented by the NVHR. It also sullies NVHRs motives, and perspectives when the Leaders insist on making political statements. Makes me wonder if they care about a social agenda or the yellow folks who are dying?

We should harness our personal beliefs, for the sake of unity and for the sake of people who suffer.

We must find ways to welcome and unite every group fighting Hep-C. Conservatives. Christians. Republicans. All of 'em. It is the ONLY way to make the most impact. Don't be selfish. Let's quench our feelings for the sake of the clients who suffer.

Most people in this diverse community won't have this conversation. They aren't going to reach out for clarification. Likely, people who are offended would be afraid to ask for fear of being labeled a racist or hateful sympathizer.

Alienating or discarding advocates because they aren’t as liberal, or conservative as you or for ANY OTHER REASON is a disservice to people who suffer from Hepatitis. As passionate as we are about politics, and as pissed as we are about this administration we have to control our feelings and consider HOW TO RELIEVE THE MOST SUFFERING?

It’s by uniting folks from every side.

When we deviate from the core mission we lose our power and unity, we lose large groups of people who are burned out on politics or just don’t agree. People are too sick, and advocates are too few to allow personal agendas to dictate our objective to relieve suffering and save lives.

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