State-Level Hepatitis C Treatment Access Successes: Lessons Learned from Pennsylvania and New York

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In the month of September, NVHR has two exciting webinar opportunities surrounding important topics in the viral hepatitis community: state level hepatitis C treatment access successes and hepatitis C screening in emergency departments.

The treatment access webinar is the second in a series highlighting state champions who have worked to expand hepatitis C treatment access in their state. In June of 2016, we held the first webinar on this topic, where we heard from champions working in Washington, DC, California, Washington state, and Connecticut. Each panelist spoke to their specific experiences using activism, litigation, and community engagement to encourage government officials to expand treatment access. This first webinar is archived here.

These case studies and lessons learned spurred momentum for our second webinar on state-level treatment access successes, which features recent movements and advocacy successes in Pennsylvania and New York.

This second webinar is set for Friday, September 9th, 2016 from 1:00-2:30pm Eastern and will focus on case studies from Pennsylvania and New York. Click here to register!

Here is a bird's-eye view of the states we will highlight in the webinar and the viral hepatitis champions that successfully advocated for expanded hepatitis C treatment access:

Pennsylvania Treatment Access Overview

Previously, Pennsylvania's guidelines called for providing curative hepatitis C treatment once a Medicaid beneficiary with hepatitis C developed advanced liver fibrosis, or if the infection had progressed to life-threatening cirrhosis and the individual had abstained from drugs or alcohol for a period of time.

In May of 2016, Pennsylvania's Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee recommended that ***all*** patients with hepatitis C receive treatment. While this decision still has to be approved by the Department of Health Services or the governor of Pennsylvania, our panelists will share how an

incredible groundswell of community support and local activism moved the needle on these recommendations in Pennsylvania.

Panelists:

Dr. Stacey Trooskin, MD, PhD, is the Director of Viral Hepatitis Programs at Philadelphia FIGHT, a comprehensive health services organization providing primary care, consumer education, research, and advocacy for people living with HIV/AIDS and those at high risk. Dr. Trooskin is also the co-chair of the Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia (HepCAP), a citywide collective dedicated to improving the continuum of hepatitis C prevention, diagnosis, care, and support services in Philadelphia.

Alexandra Shirreffs, MPH, is the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator at Philadelphia Department of Public Health and founder and, along with Dr. Trooskin, is the co-chair of the Hepatitis C Allies of Philadelphia (HepCAP).

New York Treatment Access Overview

New York residents living with hepatitis C faced similar restrictions as Pennsylvania. In New York, patients had to have stage 3 fibrosis or cirrhosis, or a concurrent HIV-infection, before they were eligible to receive treatment.

In April of 2016, several advocacy organizations brought members to Albany to speak before the state's Drug Utilization Review Board regarding these restrictions. Shortly thereafter, New York state removed all guidelines that denied Medicaid patients access to lifesaving medications until they became very ill. Our panelist will share how grassroots community activism inspired policy changes in the New York Medicaid system.

Panelist:

Matt Curtis is the Policy Director at Voices of Community Activists and Leaders (VOCAL-NY), a statewide grassroots membership organization building power among low-income people affected by HIV/AIDS, the drug war and mass incarceration. Their work includes community organizing, leadership development, public education, participatory research and direct action to create healthy and just communities.

Moderator

Our moderator for this webinar is Ronni Marks, Executive Director and Founder of the Hepatitis C Mentor and Support Group (HCMSG). After her hepatitis C diagnosis in 1997, Ronni dedicated herself to ensuring that people living with hepatitis C have information and support not available to her at the time of her diagnosis. In addition to her work at HCMSG, Ronni also serves on the New York State and City Hepatitis C task forces and leadership groups.

Click here to register for the webinar and join the conversation on expanding hepatitis C treatment

access through state advocacy!

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