VA Working to Cure Veterans of Hepatitis C

May 1, 2019 By Connie M. Welch

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he U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced, March 18, 2019, they are “on track to eliminate the hepatitis C virus in as few as two months, in all Veterans willing and able to be treated.”

They reported as of March 3, 2019, nearly 116,000 Veterans started treatment for hepatitis C and 96,654 Veterans have completed treatment and have been cured.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie stated, “As the largest single provider of HCV care in the U.S., this is terrific news because it means we are within striking range of eliminating hepatitis C among Veterans under the care of the Veterans Health Administration.”

The Veterans Administration states, “Diagnosing, treating, and curing hepatitis C virus infection among Veterans has been a significant priority for VA.”

The Danger with Hepatitis C
Left untreated hepatitis C damages the liver which can lead to cirrhosis (severe scarring), liver function impairment, liver cancer, and liver failure.

Improved Hepatitis C Treatment
Hepatitis C treatment has greatly improved with shorter treatment time, fewer side effects, and high cure rates of 95% to 99% in most cases. The average treatment time is 12 weeks, with some patients being able to do treatment in 8 weeks.

There are a variety of treatments available for hepatitis C for patients with all genotypes (virus strains), and various liver conditions.

The VA states, “all marketed hepatitis C medications are on the VA National Formulary.”

In 2014 when highly effective, all-oral direct-acting antiviral treatment became available the VA began an aggressive attack against hepatitis C, with testing and treating all Veterans who had hepatitis C.

The VA reported treating close to 2000 Veterans with hepatitis C every week. Proactive steps to treat all Veterans who had hepatitis C have resulted in 84% of Veterans less likely to develop liver

cancer.

Moving Forward to Eliminate Hepatitis C
The VA states they are on track to treat more than 125,000 Veterans by October 2019 with improved treatments which can provide the cure and save lives.

This is a great advancement toward eliminating hepatitis C in our Veterans.

If you are a Veteran and desire testing and treatment for hepatitis C, contact your local VA.
www.hepatitis.va.gov

Are you a Veteran or have a family member who is a Veteran? Do you have a question about hepatitis C, testing or treatment? Share your comments below.

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