Waking Up

January 5, 2013 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

When it comes to hepatitis C, it feels like much of the world is unconscious about the potentially devastating nature of this virus. In the U.S., the number of people who die from hepatitis C virus infection now exceeds the annual deaths caused by HIV. The prevalence of hepatitis C is about five (5) times greater than HIV. Government dollars for HIV is about thirty (30) times greater than that set aside for hepatitis C.

I say this, not to chip away at the precious dollars for HIV or other health problems; on the contrary. In the U.S., approximately 25% of those who live with HIV are also coinfected with hepatitis C, many dying from hepatitis C. When it comes to competing for funding, we need to fight for each other, not against each other.

I have heard it said that hepatitis C needs a Ryan White - a tragedy involving a child in order to wake us up. This is ridiculous. We don't need a martyr; we need a solution.

It is time for us to wake up the sleeping giant - the American public. Whether you have HIV, hepatitis C, or both, we are people, not diseases. In addition to compassion, we need improved access to health care, better treatment, screening, support services and a future free from HIV and hepatitis C.

There is a saying, either you are part of the problem or part of the solution. Which are you?

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