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NVHR Calls for Increased Recognition of Hepatitis C as a Systemic Health Condition as Part of ‘Hepatitis Awareness Month’

Organization announces educational campaign and new resources on impact of Hepatitis C outside of the liver

Washington, D.C. (May 1, 2018) – The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR) today urged healthcare providers, policymakers, and the public health community to use Hepatitis Awareness Month as an opportunity to expand treatment opportunities for patients living with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) by reconsidering the way we think about HCV. Despite the availability of new, highly effective oral medications to cure the disease, the burden of hepatitis C continues to grow in the United States.

“An estimated 5 million Americans are infected by the hepatitis C virus, which is now the most common cause of death by an infectious disease. Although curing HCV has become possible with the introduction of new, highly effective medications, many barriers limit the use of these curative drugs and minimize the overall inroads made against the HCV epidemic,” said Tina Broder, NVHR Interim Executive Director. “Treatment restrictions and lack of awareness among both clinicians and patients have kept the U.S. from seizing the opportunity to make progress toward elimination of this disease. This Hepatitis Awareness Month, NVHR urges all healthcare stakeholders to begin thinking about HCV as a systemic health condition and to take action to end restrictions that limit patient access to treatment.”

HCV targets the liver and increases risk for advanced diseases such as cirrhosis and liver cancer. However, up to 74% of individuals with HCV also experience health effects in other parts of the body, conditions collectively known as extrahepatic manifestations. HCV infection produces systemic health effects, which contribute to the development of conditions such as diabetes, fatigue, kidney disease, and chronic pain.

To help educate stakeholders about the impact of HCV beyond the liver, NVHR has launched the “[Hepatitis C – It’s About More Than Liver Disease](#)” project. As part of the project, NVHR is hosting a free [educational webinar](#) on **Wednesday, May 2nd from 1:00-2:30 pm EST** to raise awareness about the health effects of HCV outside the liver. The webinar will feature Dr. Zobair Younossi, a hepatologist and clinical researcher from Inova Health System, and Dr. Kristen Lee, a primary care physician from Boston Medical Center. The webinar will also include stories from two patients who will share their personal experiences living with HCV and other health conditions. To register, visit <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/769811360924902659>.

“The hepatitis C virus affects a patient’s overall well-being, not just the liver,” said Bekeela Davila, NVHR Program Coordinator. “HCV is a major public health issue that warrants greater attention and increased involvement from partners across all disciplines.”

“Recognizing extrahepatic conditions as part of HCV infection is important because these conditions may produce harmful health effects before there are ever signs of advanced liver disease,” said Dr. Younossi, who has been treating HCV patients and carrying out outcomes research in HCV for over 25 years. “Many of these conditions can be serious and require costly medical treatments. But early detection and treatment with HCV medications may relieve these other health effects, and in some cases prevent them from occurring. Understanding that HCV is a risk factor for other health conditions reframes the need for HCV treatment and demands additional attention and resources to put an end to this disease.”

NVHR has developed a series of educational fact sheets discussing the prevalence, symptoms, and treatment options of various HCV-related conditions outside the liver. To access these resources and learn more about the ‘It’s About More Than Liver Disease’ project, visit NVHR’s website at <http://nvhr.org/program/HCVMoreThanLiverDisease>.

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About NVHR

The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR) is a national coalition working together to eliminate hepatitis B and C in the United States. NVHR’s vision is a healthier world without hepatitis B and C. To learn more about NVHR’s advocacy priorities and how you can get involved, visit <http://www.nvhr.org> or email info@nvhr.org.