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NVHR Applauds Latest Guidance from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommending Hepatitis C Screening for all U.S. Adults

*The latest guidance from the USPSTF is an important step in the fight for hepatitis C elimination, but the lack of Congressional funding for increased screening remains a roadblock to treatment.*

**Washington, D.C. (March 2, 2020)** – The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR), a national coalition working to eliminate viral hepatitis, today applauded the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) for expanding the screening recommendations for hepatitis C to all adults ages 18-79. By expanding screening, providers will be able to diagnose and treat those with hepatitis C while reducing the stigma associated with the disease.

“The latest guidance to provide a one-time hepatitis C screening for all adults, including pregnant persons, is an important step towards diagnosing, treating, and ultimately eliminating the deadliest infectious disease in the U.S.,” said NVHR Director Lauren Canary. “In order to maximize the impact of this new recommendation, though, additional funding from Congress is needed so that the guidance can benefit the most vulnerable and at-risk who may not be a part of the care continuum currently.”

More than 2.4 million Americans are living with hepatitis C, which is associated with more deaths than the top 60 other notifiable infectious diseases combined, including HIV. There are approximately 17,000 new cases of hepatitis C each year, many of which go unreported because 70-80% of those with acute hepatitis C do not experience symptoms.

The new guidance from the USPSTF expands the previous recommendation, which had advised screening for those at high risk for hepatitis C infection and a one-time screening for all Baby Boomers, adults born between 1945-1965. The screening recommendation has been expanded because of the sharp increase in hepatitis C infection rates among young adults, driven in part by unsafe injection drug use as a result of the ongoing opioid crisis. Furthermore, hepatitis C treatment has improved drastically, and the use of direct acting antivirals (DAAs) has led to a 99% cure rate.

“Clinicians across the US should integrate these recommendations into their practices and health systems,” said NVHR Chief Medical Advisor Dr. Stacey Trooskin. “This cost-effective measure is an opportunity to reduce hepatitis C infection rates and move the U.S. towards hepatitis C elimination.”

“This recommendation is critical to inform providers and clinicians to screen all adult patients and adolescents who may be at risk, but a funded public health intervention is needed to be able to find, diagnose, and treat underserved and at-risk populations. Congress must act now to remove additional barriers to care and to increase funding for combating hepatitis C, which receives 95% less funding than efforts to fight HIV,” added Canary.

About the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR)
The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, a program of HEP, 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. NVHR’s work is guided and informed by our beliefs and commitment to: Participation, Inclusiveness, Intersectionality, Health Equity, and Stigma Elimination. For more information, visit www.nvhr.org.

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