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## January Newsletter

*HHS Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan: [A Roadmap to Elimination 2021-2025](#), plan for the Hepatitis Policy Summit and Hill Day, & more*

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### **HHS Releases Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan**

On January 7, HHS released the [\*\*Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan for the United States: A Roadmap to Elimination 2021-2025\*\*](#). The plan builds off of three prior National Viral Hepatitis Action Plans and is the first plan to include goals for the elimination of viral hepatitis as a public health threat in the United States.

The plan sets forth a clear vision for how the United States will be a place where new viral hepatitis infections are prevented, every person knows their status, and every person with viral hepatitis has high-quality health care and treatment and lives free from stigma and discrimination.

NVHR [\*\*applauded\*\*](#) the plan as a crucial element for advancing elimination efforts in the U.S.:

*“The Hepatitis Plan comes as viral hepatitis cases continue skyrocketing and prevention and treatment efforts have stalled, especially among communities that are also disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Adrienne Simmons, Director of Programs at NVHR. “This framework, along with*

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*adequate funding, are critical to facilitate a whole-of-nation response to urgently and effectively end the viral hepatitis epidemic.”*

*“The Hepatitis Plan is a significant step forward towards eliminating viral hepatitis in the U.S., but federal and state policies that create barriers to hepatitis treatment and care must also be removed to facilitate its implementation. We urge the incoming Biden Administration to take action and set a proactive public health agenda that appropriately addresses and funds the syndemic of viral hepatitis, HIV, STIs, and substance use disorders,” added Daniel Raymond, Director of Policy at NVHR.*

NVHR looks forward to working with the Biden Administration to ensure that appropriate funding and resources are allocated to achieve the goals of the plan.

## **Hepatitis Policy Summit and Hill Day**



The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable, NASTAD, Hepatitis B Foundation, and Hep B United are excited to host a virtual **Viral Hepatitis Policy Summit and Hill Day on February 17 – 18**. Hepatitis community organizations and patient advocates, providers, congressional staffers, and federal partners are invited to join viral hepatitis experts to learn more about policy priorities to advance the elimination of viral hepatitis.

Please be on the lookout for a formal invitation with registration and summit information in the coming weeks. An optional hill day training will take place on February 11. If you have any questions, please reach out to [Julio Contreras](#), Senior Associate for Policy and Legislative Affairs at NASTAD.

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Don't forget to register for NVHR's monthly Grassroots Advocacy Call, hosted on the third Thursday of the month at 3:00 pm ET. [Join us this Thursday, January 21](#) to learn about opportunities for viral hepatitis advocacy and to share progress in your jurisdiction.

*Please note that NVHR has transitioned the call platform from GoToMeeting to [Zoom](#), which requires a one-time new registration for those who have previously signed up using the GoToMeeting link.*


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# NIH Conducting Hepatitis C Clinical Study

Do you know someone living with hepatitis C in MD, DC, PA or VA?

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) at NIH is conducting a clinical trial to understand the course of liver disease in patients who are cured of hepatitis C. If you've encountered barriers to hepatitis C treatment and live within four hours of NIH in Bethesda, MD, [click here](#) to see if you qualify.

**Understanding Liver Disease  
After Cure of Hepatitis C Infection**



If you have chronic hepatitis C, you can participate in a clinical study to help researchers at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) to study the course and complications of liver disease following cure of hepatitis C infection.

**What the study may involve:**

- 12 week treatment of hepatitis C infection
- Monitoring the health of your liver with blood tests and liver imaging
- Continued outpatient monitoring by an NIH liver physician
- There is no cost for study-related visits, medications, or tests

**You can participate if you are:**

- At least 18 years of age
- Diagnosed with chronic hepatitis C at least 6 months ago
- In good general health
- Not infected with the HIV virus
- Not currently pregnant or breastfeeding

Office of Patient Recruitment  
Toll Free: 800-411-1222  
TTY 800-877-8339  
Se habla español  
PMS: 6100-nih.gov  
<https://go.usa.gov/KVpSf>  
Refer to study # 18-DK-0091

NIH...Turning Discovery Into Health®

The NIH Clinical Center,  
America's Research Hospital  
located in Bethesda, MD  
Medical Center Metro Stop  
(on the red line)

Please share this flyer with groups and individuals you think may be interested in the study.

## Viral Hepatitis Policy Updates

NVHR was pleased to welcome Daniel Raymond as the new Director of Policy at the beginning of the year. He is already driving impactful efforts as the 117th Congress gets underway and state legislatures begin meeting. Keep an eye on this space for the latest hepatitis and health policy updates.

- NVHR [joined 200+ organizations](#) in urging the incoming Biden Administration to prioritize ending the opioid crisis and end the drug war, which is a vital step in addressing rising hepatitis rates. The letter included recommendations for the Office of National Drug Control Policy to take within the first 100 days.
- NVHR applauded HHS for expanding access to medication-assisted treatment by simplifying the process for physicians to prescribe buprenorphine. You can read the full policy addressing the "X Waiver" [here](#).
- NVHR has endorsed [HR 173 - the COVID-19 Prevention and Awareness Act](#), sponsored by Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez (NY-07). The legislation affords Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's) and Community Based Non-Profits grants to bolster their efforts towards medically vulnerable populations amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
- NVHR has again endorsed the [Improving Social Determinants of Health Act of 2021](#), which was originally introduced in 2020. Rep. Nanette Barragán (CA-44) is leading the effort on this important legislation, which could improve health outcomes, reduce overall healthcare spending & address health inequities.

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## What's Coming Up?

With 2021 well underway, there's a lot happening at NVHR and within the broader viral hepatitis community.

NVHR is excited to announce that we are rolling out a refreshed website within the next month. This will be accompanied with an updated strategic plan for the organization and a new look for our newsletter. Keep an eye out for these exciting changes!

Here is what else is going on:

- Join [Hep B United](#) for a [webinar on January 28 at 3:00 pm ET](#) to learn about hepatitis B patient engagement programs and discuss the
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experiences and perspectives on access to care and treatment for persons living with hepatitis B.

- The Hepatitis B Foundation Scientific and Medical Advisory Board (SMAB) released a [Q&A](#) about the COVID-19 vaccines to address concerns that people living with hepatitis B have expressed.
- Our partners at NACCHO surveyed its HIV, STI, & Viral Hepatitis Sentinel Network in July 2020 to better understand local health department (LHD) hepatitis programs and services, challenges and opportunities, and the impact of COVID-19 on these critical efforts. [The survey revealed](#) that LHDs lead a coordinated response to the syndemic of hepatitis, HIV and other STIs, and substance use at the local level, but limited funding, staffing challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic impact LHDs' ability to prevent and ultimately eliminate viral hepatitis.
- The CDC released a [Technical Package for Syringe Services Programs](#) in mid-December, which was developed through collaboration between the CDC & NASTAD. The Technical Package is an authoritative document that outlines core elements and evidence-based strategies for comprehensive syringe services programs, which are key components to viral hepatitis prevention, screening, and linkage to care.

Make sure you're following us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) for the latest, and don't forget to check [our calendar](#) for upcoming events.

*Please be sure to mark [info@nvhr.org](mailto:info@nvhr.org) as a safe sender in your inbox so you don't miss any of the latest news!*



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