

The Spirit of Volunteerism - My Point of View

I have been a volunteer for many years. I learned about volunteering as a child. My parents took me to plays and they would assist with making costumes, making props, and getting food for the participants in Long Beach, California. My brother and I were members of the cast in some plays. As a teenager we still volunteered to assist with symphonies and various other types of activities in the community, and danced in plays. I even served alcohol to patrons at an Arthur Fiedler concert at the Cape Cod Mall in the 1970s as a volunteer. I did enjoy the tips that day. In 1976 my mother made us costumes for the bicentennial and my family starred in a film reenactment of a colonial family, in the Sandwich Hoxie house, the oldest house on Cape Cod.

Some of you readers may be asking yourselves, "What does this conversation have to do with the New Mexico Hepatitis C Alliance?" Over the past several years I have been blessed to work with some of the most incredible people I have ever known, the volunteers that make up all of the New Mexico Hepatitis C Alliance. The New Mexico Hepatitis C Alliance is a 501 C3 organization that exemplifies the true spirit of volunteerism. There are some SILENT HEROES, which step in all of the time, when the NMHCA is in need of passion, energy, and enthusiasm.

I admire and respect all of the individuals that have stepped up to the plate for the NMHCA, it is with EVERYONES efforts, vision, and foresight that will keep this organization progressing forward. There are many changes that the NMHCA has gone through over the years, even with the changes many members continue to work together as a team to accomplish a far reaching mission to eradicate, "slay the dragon", the ever looming silent destroyer of lives, hepatitis C.

I am going to step down as President of the New Mexico Hepatitis C Alliance at the annual meeting on September 25, 2008 in hopes that some one with "business sense" will join on the board to assist with pushing the NMHCA forward. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for your support, many talents, truthfulness, opinions, and for hanging in there when it seems the NMHCA takes a turn into the uncertain future at times.

I have worked at the University of New Mexico Hospital in the hepatitis C clinic for 5 years. The scourge of the hepatitis C epidemic effects the lives of people through all walks of life, we need to continue to stand together to rid the public of the STEREOTYPE assumptions that some individuals continue to perceive regarding the so called typical image of an individual with hepatitis C. I am proud to associate with each and every individual that I come in contact with. Anyone that has volunteered at any time for the NMHCA is a special kind of person with a passion to get the word out about this devastating virus that causes such great suffering for many individuals and families in many inconceivable ways. Take care and I will see you at the Annual Meeting.

Thanks to everyone for your generosity, and your many talents.

Lucinda M. Yates, President

ACTION ALERT: Urge Obama and McCain to Include Hepatitis C in Campaign Message

The Democratic and Republican conventions are over and all eyes are on the 2008 Presidential race. As they enter the final two months of the campaign, both Senator Obama and Senator McCain will sharpen their messages and provide details on where they stand on particular issues.

While both candidates have talked about health care in general, neither has mentioned the hepatitis C epidemic in the United States. This is unacceptable. Hepatitis C is the most common blood-borne chronic viral infection in the United States. At least 4 million Americans currently have chronic hepatitis C, with 25,000 new infections occurring every year. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that the death rate from HCV-related liver disease will triple by the year 2019. No other disease burden is expected to increase as rapidly as that of hepatitis C in the coming decade.

You can make a difference by urging both candidates to be a leader in the fight against hepatitis C by (1) making a public statement about the disease, (2) supporting increased funding for viral hepatitis programs, and (3) cosponsoring the Hepatitis C Epidemic and Control Act.

Please take a few minutes to write to both campaigns!

Engaging the Public Through Volunteers

By Joanne Fritz, About.com Guide to Nonprofit Charitable Orgs

Most nonprofits could not succeed without the help of their volunteers. Although volunteers provide virtually free labor, that is not the primary reason for having them. Volunteers represent the public that nonprofits serve. Welcoming that public and engaging them in your mission as volunteers is what community service is all about.



NEW MEXICO
HEPATITIS C
ALLIANCE

OUR MISSION:
To live in a world free of hepatitis C virus (HCV)

OUR VISION:
To promote collaboration among individual, community, state and national policymakers to ensure universal education and access to prevent, manage & cure HCV infection and support all affected by hepatitis C

Resistance to HCV Protease Inhibitors

As reported in the September 12, 2008 *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, D.J. Bartels and colleagues analyzed the natural prevalence of HCV variants with pre-existing resistance to NS3/4A protease inhibitors in patients who had not received prior treatment. Out of 570 treatment-naive individuals studied, 98% had wild-type HCV¹ without resistance mutations. The researchers detected four mutations that confer resistance to protease inhibitors: V36M (0.9%), R155K (0.7%), V170A (0.2%), and R109K (0.2%). V36M, R109K, and V170A all confer low-level resistance (< 7-fold) to protease inhibitors in cultured cells; R155K confers low-level resistance to telaprevir and boceprevir (SCH 503034), but high-level resistance (< 70-fold) to BILN 2061 and ITMN-191. Four of five patients with the V36M or R109K variants who were treated with telaprevir plus Pegasys, with or without ribavirin, for 8-24 weeks achieved SVR (the fifth was lost to follow-up). Among individuals with the R155K variant, telaprevir/Pegasys/ribavirin produced greater antiviral activity than Pegasys/ribavirin alone, though response was reduced compared to patients with wild-type virus. "High levels of naturally occurring protease inhibitor-resistant variants were uncommon (< 1% each) in HCV treatment-naive patients," the researchers concluded. "As new HCV agents are evaluated in clinical trials, it will be important to monitor the effect of baseline variants on sensitivity."

Looking for our website? We changed our address!

Please go to www.nmhepcalliance.org. Our name was changed to reflect more closely who we are. It also has been redesigned. Check it out today!

Ever wonder what the HCV and HIV viruses look like?
Look no further, here they are in color.

Dreams pass into the reality of action. From the actions stems the dream again; and this interdependence produces the highest form of living.

Anais Nin

"All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them".

Walt Disney



2009 World Hepatitis Day Planning

After a successful 2008 World Hepatitis Day, observed on May 19, it is time to begin planning for the 2009 observance in the United States. To ensure continued growth and maximum impact for 2009, a U.S. World Hepatitis Day planning committee is being formed. The purpose of the committee will be to plan a coordinated national campaign to build upon the momentum from the 2008 observance.

Ideally, the planning committee will include representatives from national organizations, local, state and federal governments, private industry partners and persons impacted by HBV and HCV. Planning will be conducted through monthly conference calls and emails. Initially we will start with conference calls once a month. As the national campaign is planned, there will most likely be subcommittees which may need to meet more frequently. If you are interested in serving on the 2009 U.S. World Hepatitis Day Planning Committee, please contact Martha Saly, NVHR Administrator at mbsaly@nvhr.org. The first conference call of the Planning Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, October 8 at 1 PM EST.

Shorter Therapy for HCV Genotypes 1/4 From HCV Advocate

Researchers continue to explore shorter treatment durations for chronic hepatitis C patients who respond rapidly to interferon-based therapy. As reported in the August 2008 issue of *Gastroenterology*, P. Ferenci and colleagues from Austria studied more than 500 genotype 1 and 4 patients treated with 180 mcg/week pegylated interferon alpha-2a (Pegasys) plus 1000-1200 mg/day weight-based ribavirin. Among 143 patients who achieved rapid virological response (RVR) — undetectable HCV RNA at week 4 — and completed 24 weeks of therapy, the overall sustained virological response (SVR) rate 24 weeks after treatment completion was 80.4% (78.8% for genotype 1; 86.7% for genotype 4). Younger age, lower body fat, low baseline HCV viral load (≤ 400,000 IU/ml), and genotype 4 were significant predictors of RVR. Once a patient achieved RVR, however, no additional baseline factors significantly predicted sustained response. "This prospective study confirms that a 24-week regimen of peginterferon alpha-2a plus ribavirin 1000-1200 mg/day is appropriate in genotype 1 and 4 patients with a low baseline HCV RNA level who achieve an RVR by week 4 of therapy," the researchers concluded.

Other recent studies of tailored treatment duration based on early response were reviewed in the February 2008 HCV Advocate, and shorter therapy for genotype 2/3 was discussed in the August 2008 issue.

Wiping Out Hep C in New Mexico is published quarterly by the New Mexico Hepatitis C alliance, Inc. The newsletter is also accessible on our website, www.nmhepc.org. The Alliance is organized and incorporated under the laws of the State of New Mexico as a non-profit corporation for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, without profit to any officer or director. Lucinda Yates, President; R. Holly Taylor, Treasurer; Benjamin Corsey III, Secretary; Karen Gonzales; Yolanda Herrera, Kory Montoya, Julie Morrow; and Rachel Pacheco; To contribute an article or a letter to the editor, please email us at info@nmhepcalliance.org or send to NMHCA, P.O. Box 6601, Albuquerque, NM 87197.