U.S. Task Force Declines to Press for Widespread Baby Boomer Hep C Screens

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The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has refrained from recommending that all baby boomers undergo screening for hepatitis C virus (HCV), putting the task force at odds with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), not to mention a legion of outraged hep C advocates, according to CQ HealthBeat.

An advisory governmental panel, the task force gave what's known as a "B" grade draft recommendation that those at high risk of contracting hep C, including anyone with a history of injection drug use or who received a blood transfusion before 1992, should be screened for the virus. The B grade means the screening will be free under the Affordable Care Act for those who fall into these risk categories.

The task force gave a "C" grade draft recommendation for testing Americans born between 1945 and 1965, stating that health care providers "may consider" testing baby boomers. Members of this generation make up 75 percent of all hepatitis C cases in the United States. The "C" grade for the baby boomer risk group means the task force sees a modest net benefit to widespread screening. Also, the test will not be free for boomers without a history of injection drug use or transfusions that date back more than 20 years.

In August, the CDC recommended that all boomers get screened for hep C.

To read the Task Force recommendation statement, click here.

To read the CDC recommendation statement, click here.

To read the CQ story, click here (subscription required).

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