CDC Reports 21% Increase in Hepatitis C Cases

Advocacy organizations are “alarmed” by the findings.

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released new data showing continued increases in hepatitis C virus (HCV) across the country, reporting a 21 percent increase in new infections between 2016 and 2015, a recent press release from the AIDS Institute reports.

The advocacy organization says it is “alarmed” by the findings, which show that in 2016, there were an estimated 41,200 new cases of hepatitis C, a 21 percent increase from the previous year. Since 2010, the agency reports that new HCV cases have increased by 350 percent. The report also shows that hepatitis B cases are on the rise.

Over years or decades, chronic hepatitis B and C can lead to severe complications including cirrhosis, liver cancer and the need for a liver transplant.

Experts say injection drug use, mainly linked to the opioid epidemic, is driving these increases. HCV and HIV advocates continue to push Congress to allocate additional resources to help combat the crisis, but so far, no additional funding has been granted.

Currently, the CDC’s viral hepatitis initiatives receive $39 million a year in funding from the federal government. But advocates at the AIDS Institute and their partners argue that the agency needs at least $134 million to adequately fund education, prevention, testing and surveillance activities.

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