Advocates Urge HHS to End Barriers to Hep C Treatment

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A coalition of advocacy groups and medical experts has sent a letter to U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell demanding she take leadership in eliminating barriers to treatment access for the hepatitis C virus (HCV), according to a statement by the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR), a coalition member.

More than 700 organizations, individuals and medical providers across the country signed the letter. It raises alarm over restrictions placed on public and private insurance payers that make them unable to provide the latest hep C cures to every patient in need.

Under the limitations, many state Medicaid programs will give the latest line of HCV drugs to only the sickest patients (those with a severe liver damage score of F3 or F4) and will also routinely deny access to those with current or recent substance abuse issues.

The letter claims that those barriers undermine the purpose of the Affordable Care Act (the health care reform law, or ACA), which aims to provide affordable, equal-access health care to people regardless of pre-existing conditions. The coalition seeks treatment for everyone living with hepatitis C and is calling on government, pharmaceutical and insurance reps to work together on solutions.

Key groups included: Caring Ambassadors Program; Global Liver Institute; Harm Reduction Coalition; Hepatitis Education Project; Hepatitis C Mentor & Support Group; National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD); National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR); Project Inform; and Treatment Access Expansion Project (TAEP).

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