



HEPATITIS FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

STAKEHOLDERS CONSENSUS MEETING

CLOSING THE GAP ON RACIAL & ETHNIC VIRAL HEPATITIS DISPARITIES

For Immediate Release

Contact:

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HEPATITIS FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL TO CONVENE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS MEETING ON *CLOSING THE GAP ON RACIAL & ETHNIC VIRAL HEPATITIS DISPARITIES* September 12-14, 2014

Silver Spring, MD - Hepatitis Foundation International (HFI), a non-profit organization dedicated to eradicating viral hepatitis globally, today announced that it will convene "**Closing the Gap on Racial and Ethnic Viral Hepatitis Disparities**," a national stakeholders consensus meeting, Friday, September 12 to Sunday September 14, 2014 at the Historic Kent Manor on Kent Island, Maryland.

"Emergent increases in the incidence of viral hepatitis combined with significant ongoing adverse health impacts show that the disease remains an urgent public health crisis," said Karen Wirth, Chair of the HFI Board of Directors. "Viral hepatitis accounts for considerable morbidity and mortality and contributes to devastating financial and emotional costs to individuals, families, and entire communities."

"Significant disparities exist in the incidence and prevalence of viral hepatitis B and C for different racial/ethnic groups with access to screening, diagnosis, counseling and treatment. Rates across racial and ethnic groups are dismal," said HFI CEO Ivonne Fuller. "A multi-stakeholder approach is needed to address the scale and scope of viral hepatitis in the United States and to overcome challenges that disproportionately impact these communities. This Stakeholder's meeting will address policy concerns for patient and health advocacy organizations while addressing the needs and concerns of disproportionate patient populations that are most significantly impacted by hepatitis, specifically viral Hepatitis B and C."

According to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) National Notifiable Disease Surveillance System, the difference in the rate of incidence in different ethnic communities is noteworthy:

- According to CDC data for 2011, the **highest hepatitis B mortality rates by ethnicity were observed among Asian Americans** (2.7 deaths per 100,000 people). Hepatitis B-related liver cancer rates among Asian Americans are also higher than any other ethnic group;
- **African Americans** made up about 13% of the U.S. population from 1999-2002, yet they made up **nearly 23% of patients living with hepatitis C**. African Americans are not only more likely to have hepatitis C; they are also more likely to die as a result of the virus.
- A National Institutes of Health (NIH) study determined **Latinos with viral hepatitis have faster liver fibrosis progression rates, are infected at an earlier age, and are more likely to be HIV co-infected** - all aspects which make this community especially vulnerable to liver disease, cancer and other deadly conditions resulting from hepatitis C;
- Among all racial and ethnic groups, **American Indians have the highest rate of hepatitis C infection**, as well as the **highest hepatitis C-related mortality rates**. American Indians experienced the highest increase (86.2%), compared to 36% among Caucasians and nearly 24% among Latinos. American Indians were also the only ethnic group with more than 0.5 cases of hepatitis C per 100,000 of the general population for the years 2002-2010;
- The **prevalence of HCV among baby boomers**, (individuals born between 1946 and 1964) ranges from 11.49 per 100,000 to 20.37 per 100,000;
- Prevalence rates may be **higher among military personnel and/or veterans**, in part because of overrepresentation of veterans among the homeless and among injection drug user populations.

The Hepatitis Foundation International (HFI) is convening the National Stakeholders' Consensus Meeting to assess unaddressed needs in the fight against viral hepatitis. To join with the HFI in addressing hepatitis disparities, to attend the Stakeholders meeting, or for additional information see, <http://www.hepatitisfoundation.org/ABOUT/stakeholders.html>.

About The Hepatitis Foundation International

The Hepatitis Foundation International (<http://www.HepatitisFoundation.org>) is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization established in 1994 to eradicate chronic hepatitis for 500 million people globally. HFI is dedicated to increasing and promoting health and wellness, as well as, reducing the incidence of preventable liver-related chronic diseases and lifestyles that negatively impact the liver. Some of these diseases include; obesity, diabetes, hepatitis, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS,

cardiovascular disease and fatty/liver cancer. We implement our mission through our touchstones to educate, prevent, serve, support and reach over 5 million patients, families, community based organization and health care professionals annually through our public and private partnerships.

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