MAY is Hepatitis Awareness Month

The month of **May** is Hepatitis Awareness Month and **May 19th** is the second annual national Hepatitis Testing Day. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) has developed numerous free resources and materials designed to raise awareness and education the public about hepatitis.

Hepatitis Foundation International (HFI) is dedicated to informing and educating the public by making available up-to-date and reliable facts. We want you to make well-informed decisions for yourself and your loved ones' health. HFI urges everyone to take an online hepatitis risk assessment created by the CDC at [http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/riskassessment/](http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/riskassessment/).

Ivonne Fuller Joins HFI as the Newest Member of the Team

Ms. Fuller brings extensive experience in healthcare as an entrepreneur and in corporate relations, business development, fundraising and policy to HFI. During her career, she has served as Board Chair, Third Millennium Health COOP of DC, an Assistant Professor in Allied Health Sciences Department at Howard University, was chosen as a Fellow with the Harvard University Policy Institute and has consulted on Capitol Hill as a Senior Policy Fellow. She has also held the position of Associate Executive Director with the National Medical Association.

Ivonne previously collaborated with the HFI in 2003 on the white paper, “Promoting Prevention of Viral Hepatitis in the African American Community.” To review the paper, see [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2568312/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2568312/). Thelma King Thiel, CEO of HFI said, “We are thrilled to have her on board as Executive Vice President, and we look forward to benefiting from her wealth of experience.”

Ms. Fuller has also been honored as a Community Leader in Who’s Who of Washington, DC 2010, is a nationally registered prevention professional and is currently obtaining her project management certification. Her academic background includes a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration, concentration International Business and Spanish Studies and a Master’s Degree in Public Health Administration. Ivonne looks forward to the challenge and stated, “Public health has been a passion of mine and I look forward to bringing my experience to HFI.” “HFI has been a stalwart in public health and as it embarks on the next 20 years, I look forward to contributing to its rich legacy.”

Hepatitis Foundation International is dedicated to promoting liver wellness and reducing the incidence of preventable liver-related chronic diseases including; obesity, diabetes, hepatitis, substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS and fatty/liver nationally and globally.

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Knocking out any one of the livers’ functions can knock you out for good

*Chief Executive Officer*
**Billy’s Story by Kathy Gacos Sister**

On January 26, 2013, the candle of life which had always glowed brightly, flickered and went dark with the passing of my mother Kathryn Lieberman.

Kathryn, age 79, suffered a life ending fall while we were on vacation in Puerto Rico. In lieu of flowers the family requested memorial donations be made in Kathryn’s memory to the Hepatitis Foundation International. My father and I have been overwhelmed by the support of family and friends willing to make contributions to the Foundation. My mother wrote a story that was published in Liver Health April-June 2007. I want to briefly share this story again as to why my mother worked to bring awareness and education about Hepatitis.

*A mysterious death leaves a grieving mother with more questions than answers*

My brother Bill passed away on January 16, 2006 from a profound hemorrhage of the posterior nose. An artery had broken for some reason and his heart gave out from the loss of blood. He lived alone, did not call 911 and lived only 4 minutes from the hospital. Billy was diagnosed with Hepatitis C in 2000, when he was 39 years old and probably had it for 20 years. He immediately decided to take the treatment available at the time, which was interferon and ribavirin. After 6 months, he was taken off the treatment because it was not working. In the meantime, Bill finished school for a new career as a medical laboratory technician he was pursuing. He struggled to complete his degree and hampered by severe fatigue. Even with the Hepatitis C diagnosis Billy managed to finish his degree in 2003 and it was the highlight of his life. This was a proud moment for him and our family but especially for my mother. Around this time his latest biopsy showed that his liver was becoming worse, he immediately started the “new” treatment (pegylated interferon and ribavirin) in spring 2003 which was working. We were all so happy and grateful. He was going to get another chance at life, or so we thought. Billy was supposed to feel well now since he completed treatment. Six months passed and he continued having fatigue, joint pain, and other strange side effects (that we assumed) were associated with interferon.

To make a long story short, Billy passed at 46 and never got his second chance at life. He never had the opportunity to begin a career he worked so hard to achieve. Billy left behind two young daughters, a devastated family and devastated mother—so desperate to find the cure for her son. My mother stated, “Some people wonder why it matters so much to me. They advise me to get on with my life and that I probably will never know. However, every day we read about people, especially parents, who take on causes because their loved one has died. Perhaps this is mine.” As her daughter who lost her brother Billy to this disease, “I hope I am able to continue in my mother’s footsteps to bring awareness and education to Hepatitis.”

The Hepatitis Foundation International needs your support. Your gift of $5, $10, $25, $100, $250, $500 or whatever you can give makes all the difference…we are working on your behalf to serve you and honor those loved ones that are suffering from hepatitis or diseases that affect the liver. But we need your help now more than ever. If you want to make a donation to HFI by a debit or credit card, rest assured you can donate securely online at on our web page. It is fast and easy and will only take a moment of your time. If you prefer to make your donation by phone and contact us toll free on (800) 891-0707. Thank you for joining with us.
HFI Offers Free Health Savings Card

Hepatitis Foundation International (HFI) is pleased to offer a free discount Health Savings Card. The HFI Health Savings Card is pre-activated and can be used immediately to receive savings of up to 75% off prescription at over 56,000 pharmacies (Safeway, Wal-Mart, Rite-Aid, Wegmans, Giant, etc) nationwide. This card is especially helpful for persons without health insurance and the underinsured. Even if you have insurance, you can still use this card to receive a discount on non-covered prescription drugs. All prescriptions processed through the HFI Health Savings Card are completely confidential and no name is required. HFI receives a modest monetary contribution each time a prescription is filled.

The free HFI Health Savings Card also includes discounts on Eyeglasses, Hearing Aids, Diabetic Supplies, Dental, Lasik Surgery and more. The Savings Card can be printed as needed and can be forwarded to patients, family and friends. Visit the HFI website www.HepatitisFoundation.org to receive the HFI Savings Card today!

EU Approves Pegasys in Children Aged Five Years and Older

Treatment with Pegasys (peginterferon afa-2a) plus ribavirin has been approved by the European Medicines Agency for chronic hepatitis C virus in children five years of age and older.

Mother-to-child transmission of HCV is the most common route of acquiring the infection in an estimated 65,000 children living with chronic HCV in Europe. While mother to child HCV transmission is between 4% and 10%, 80% of these children will develop chronic disease. Most HCV infected children do not have any symptoms, but the disease is progressive and can lead to advanced liver damage (cirrhosis) liver cancer and end-stage liver disease.

The study showed that treatment with Pegasys plus ribavirin achieved sustained viral response in the blood 24 weeks after completion of treatment in over half of the children treated (53%), compared with 21% of children who received Pegasys alone.

One Drink a Day is NOT OK

How convincing is the recommendation that you not drink alcohol when you have hepatitis C?

Data from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey may convince you to listen more carefully.

The data showed that people with hepatitis C who drank three or more drinks a day were five times more likely to die than heavy drinkers who were not infected. What was incredibly striking was the risk of liver-related death among people with hepatitis C who averaged two or fewer drinks a day was 74 times that of similar people without hepatitis C.

Dr. Zobair Younossi Chair of Medicine at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church, VA, warns that even a moderate amount of alcohol use when a patient has hepatitis C can increase the risk of death and liver-related mortality. He says, “A drink a day is not ok.”
Taking Liver Health to the Hill

The Hepatitis Foundation International in collaboration with American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, Trust for American’s Health, and joined forces with public health experts to conduct Placing the Liver Front and Center – The Right Place for Prevention Briefing before congressional and national leaders. The Briefing highlighted a critically important missing component in the challenge to promote liver wellness for a healthier nation.

The Expert Panel included:

Richard Hamburg, MPH, Trust for Americas Health, which works on a variety of issues to help protect the health of every community and make disease prevention a national priority.

Dr. Kathleen Schwarz, MD, Director, Pediatric Liver Center, Professor of Pediatrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine stressed the need for an increase in liver research funds to find cures for the many liver diseases that affect children as well as adults.

Dr. Raymond Koff, MD, Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Founding Member of the Hepatitis Foundation International summarized the hundreds of critical sustaining body functions that can be seriously compromised by inappropriate selection of foods, alcoholic beverages, chemicals in drugs, and environmental pollutants.

Dr. Linda Hancock, FNP, PhD, Family Nurse Practitioner and Director of the Wellness Resource Center at Virginia Commonwealth University, shared her 25 years of experiences with college students – identifying this generation as one of the most highly medicated, chemically dependent, and overweight groups of students she has ever encountered. She stated, “Students display a significant lack of information about the relationship of poor liver health and the potential of lifelong consequences.”

Thelma King Thiel, CEO of the Hepatitis Foundation International served as the moderator for the Briefing. She sounded the alarm for need for liver education. Mrs. Thiel further noted the liver can be seriously damaged without any warning signs until the damage is life threatening and irreparable.

The Briefing underscored the importance of making prevention a priority at a time when this country continues to debate the implementation of healthcare reform and decreasing the federal budget. The panel of experts presented a key message—liver health education can prevent many liver related chronic diseases and improve health outcomes while significantly lowering healthcare costs.

Thousands Exposed to HIV and HCV in Dentist’s Office

An estimated 7,000 patients who visited Dr. Scott Harrington’s dental office in suburban Tulsa, Oklahoma over the past six years may have been exposed to HIV and hepatitis.

The investigation began after the health department alerted the dentistry board to a potential hepatitis C infection from Harrington’s office. Outward cleanliness of the dentists’ office belied the mess that was behind the cabinets. Instruments that came out of the autoclave had rust on them. Furthermore, the autoclave was not being used properly and had not been tested for at least six years.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends testing of autoclaves on a monthly basis to ensure they are properly sterilizing the equipment. Harrington was accused of 17 violations including negligence, being a menace to the public health, multiple sterilization issues, and cross-contamination issues and using outdated drugs. Many of the procedures he did were invasive and exposed patients’ blood, tissue and bones being carried out in an unsanitary environment.

Be aware that your dentist wears a mask, goggles, surgical gloves and opens sterilized instruments in front of you. If you have concerns, call your state Dental Board to check for any violations that may have been reported.
Waiting for Approval of Drugs. . . .

What About Herbal Supplements?

Why does it take so long for drugs to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)? The FDA serves as a guardian of your liver. Every drug on the market is made up of chemicals that must be processed through your liver. Careful year long studies of these combinations must be approved first in tests on animals and then humans to observe any side effects that might damage the liver or other organs in the body.

However; herbal and dietary supplements are not under such regulation. Like all drugs or things ingested, herb and dietary supplements also have to be processed through your liver and can cause toxic reactions and serious liver damage. Remember the food you eat is the fuel your liver converts into hundreds of life sustaining body functions 24/7. You need to be the guardian of your liver when it comes to the foods you select, things you drink and fumes you inhale. This is extremely important especially if you have an infected or already damaged liver.

Be your own ‘food and drug administrator’, take care of your personal chemical power converter. . . .your one and only liver. Click here for more information.

Who’s in the Race for HCV Treatment?

There are at least four categories of hepatitis C antivirals. Protease inhibitors are the current standard of care, like Vertex’s drug Incivek and Merck’s Victrelis. The therapy requires ribavirin and an injection of interferon, an immune-boosting protein that can cause flu-like side effects for as long as 48 weeks. In development there are “nucs” or nucleotide polymerase inhibitors like sofosbuvir. Non-nucs or non-nucleotide polymerase inhibitors the works are from AbbVie (formerly Abbott), Gilead, Vertex, and Genentech. Also, Bristol-Myers Squibb is betting on another kind of compound, an NS5A inhibitor, daclatasvir.

Organ Donation Glitch

Major campaigns to encourage individuals to sign a donor card providing permission to retrieve their organs upon their demise have increased awareness of the need for organs for transplantation. The major glitch that undermines this system is that donor cards usually carried in ones wallet are never retrieved and placed in a safe along with the patient’s other valuables on admission to the hospital. Unless that family member is aware of the patient’s desire to have his or her organs donated, hospital personnel currently are not permitted to ask family members to provide permission and hundreds of organs appropriate for saving as many as eight lives from a single donor are lost.

According to the U.S. department of Health and Human services more than 117,000 people need an organ transplant and if only 10% of the estimated 2.4 million Americans who die each year, more than enough organs would be available to fill the current need for organ transplants. Because of privacy laws, hospital staff and doctor’s offices can’t ask if you are an organ donor. Current protocol depends on a loved one authorized by the patient insisting that the organs be donated in the event of death of the patient.

A simple and effective way to avoid this tragic loss of viable organs is to add language on admission forms providing permission to be an organ donor. In the meantime, make sure your loved ones know of your desire to be an organ donor. For more information about organ donation visit www.unos.org