



Caring Ambassadors Hepatitis C Program Newsletter

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IN THE NEWS

Important news regarding the HCV sequence database

“Regretfully, NIH has decided to stop funding this project. The funding has been moved to the Viral Bioinformatics Resource Center, who will be maintaining a different HCV site at <http://www.hcvdb.org>.

Because of this, we can no longer maintain the work-intensive HCV immunology database. The HCV immunology database will remain accessible for the foreseeable future, but due to lack of resources, no new information will be added. We will display this information at the top of our immunology web pages. For new epitope information, users of this database can try the Immuno Epitope Database (<http://www.immuneepitope.org>).

The HCV sequence database is still being maintained, although not quite as diligently as before. The website will be tied even more closely to the HIV site, so that all new HIV tools will also be available for HCV. When we feel (or you let us know) that the annotation quality begins to significantly deteriorate, this site will be closed.” [Read more...](#)

Hepatitis outbreak could result in new laws

“The hepatitis C investigation has uncovered a lot of holes in Nevada’s health care system and some lawmakers want to see them fixed before public health is put at risk again. When the hepatitis C investigation began, one of the biggest flaws noticed was the lack of communication among the health district, the state health division and medical facilities.

Lawmakers on the Legislative Committee on Health Care feel that closing those loopholes of communication will drastically improve the system. Here are just a few of the recommendations the health committee wants to make to legislators next year.” [Read more...](#)

Larger liver transplant pool

“There’s good news for the 17,000 people on the liver transplant waiting list, especially for those patients with hepatitis C. The majority of liver transplants in the United States are for patients with hepatitis C, the most common cause of the liver disease cirrhosis. To accommodate the large transplant waiting list, many centers have expanded their donor criteria to include older donors.

Some have been concerned hepatitis C patients would have poorer transplant outcomes as a result of the extended pool, but recent research shows organs from older patients are safe. Researchers at Washington School of Medicine in St. Louis found no differences in the one, three and five-year outcomes of patients with and without hepatitis C, who received organs from donors age 60 and older.” [Read more...](#)

Study disproves belief that hepatitis C blunts HIV drugs

Impaired immune response after antiretroviral therapy may be due to genetic factors

“A new study challenges the long-held belief that the hepatitis C virus (HCV) impairs the immune system’s ability to restore itself after HIV patients are treated with highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART). Researchers at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center focused on levels of CD4 cells -- the immune cells that are attacked by HIV -- and whether CD4 cells can rebuild after HAART is used to suppress HIV infection. For the study, the researchers analyzed the medical records of 322 patients.

‘We’ve been observing that in some patients that are co-infected with hepatitis C, we were treating their HIV with HAART but didn’t always get very good restoration of CD4,’ lead researcher Dr. Marina Nunez, an assistant professor of infectious diseases, said in a Wake Forest news release. ‘Some studies have suggested it was because of the hepatitis C. This study says it’s not the presence of active hepatitis C replication.’” [Read more...](#)

Warfarin may prevent liver failure in hepatitis C

The drug warfarin may help prevent liver failure in thousands of people with Hepatitis C, according to new research.

“In a study published tomorrow (1 August) in the Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis, researchers show that warfarin reduces the scarring on the liver caused by Hepatitis C. This scarring, or fibrosis, replaces normal liver cells and can lead to cirrhosis of the liver and ultimately liver failure.

Following the new findings in mouse models, the Imperial College London researchers are now embarking on a clinical trial of warfarin as a treatment for people with Hepatitis C, funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC).” [Read more...](#)

New treatment therapy helps inhibit hepatitis C

Two new studies examine the use of the nucleoside polymerase inhibitor, R1626, to the standard therapy for hepatitis C.

“The first study shows that adding the treatment to standard therapy with pegylated interferon alpha plus ribavirin leads to a synergistic antiviral effect. In the search for new and better treatments, researchers have been testing R1626, which previously has been used to inhibit HCV replication in vitro.

The study group included 104 patients with HCV genotype 1. Twenty-one took 1500 mg of R1626 twice a day along with peginterferon alpha-2a. Thirty-two took 3000 mg of R1626 twice a day along with peginterferon alpha-2a. Thirty-one took 1500 mg of R1626 twice a day along with peginterferon alpha-2a and ribavirin. And 20 took the standard of care treatment of peginterferon alpha-2a with ribavirin. After four weeks, HCV RNA was undetectable in 29 percent, 69 percent, and 74 percent of patients in the respective study arms, compared to 5 percent of patients receiving the standard of care treatment. “The results of the present study show a marked increase in antiviral effect in patients when ribavirin is added to the combination of R1626 and peginterferon alfa-2a,’ the authors report.” [Read more...](#)

Vertex hepatitis C drug meets study goal

“Vertex Pharmaceuticals Inc. said late Thursday its hepatitis C drug candidate telaprevir was both safe and prompted a response in patients during a midstage study. Interim results from a Phase IIa

clinical trial showed that twice-daily and three-times-daily doses of telaprevir in combination with standard hepatitis C treatments were effective in prompting a response. More than 80 percent of 160 patients had undetectable levels of hepatitis C after four-week and 12-week periods. A complete analysis will be performed upon the conclusion of this study in 2009, the company said.” [Read more...](#)

Pharmasset: hepatitis C drug positive in early stage

“Pharmasset Inc said preliminary results from an early-stage trial of its chronic hepatitis C treatment showed that the dosage tested had greater safety potential and could be carried forward into mid-stage studies, sending its shares up as much as 12 percent. The data does not change the timeline of the drug, but implies a very high efficacy rate, analysts told Reuters. The drug, R7128, was being tested for a 1,000 milligram, twice daily dose in combination with two current hepatitis C therapies, Pegasys and Copegus, in 31 treatment-naive patients chronically infected with hepatitis C virus.” [Read more...](#)

Hep C activist dies at 54

Feds denied Pillon-Trudeau hepatitis C compensation weeks before her death Sunday

“Henry Trudeau wipes a tear from his eye as he speaks about his common-law wife Janice Pillon-Trudeau who died Sunday at the family home. Pillon-Trudeau believed she contracted hepatitis C from a blood transfusion but never received compensation from the federal government. As a nurse and hepatitis C activist, Janice Pillon-Trudeau spent a lifetime helping others, but in the end could not help herself.

Pillon-Trudeau died Sunday at 54 of complications from hepatitis C -- which she contracted through tainted blood -- only seven weeks after the federal government deemed her not sick enough to collect any of the \$1 billion earmarked for people who contracted hepatitis C from the blood system.” [Read more...](#)

Early treatment is key to combating hepatitis C virus - Researchers publish research results in on-line edition of Journal of Virology

“Canadian researchers have shown that patients who develop a rapid poly-functional immune response against hepatitis C virus (HCV) can eliminate the virus rapidly without any treatment, according to a new study published in the Journal of Virology.

The investigation was led by Dr. Naglaa Shoukry and Dr. Julie Bruneau, who affiliated to both the Research Centre of the Université de Montréal Hospital Centre and the Université de Montréal, as well as researchers from the Institut national de la santé et de la recherche scientifique (Montréal branch) and Assiut University, Egypt. The study found that patients who could not mount a rapid poly-functional immune response became persistently infected and eventually lost any immune cells directed against HCV. What’s more, the research team found that when early treatment was administered within the first months following an infection, patients developed a rapid poly-functional immune response against HCV and eliminated the virus rapidly without any further treatment.” [Read more...](#)

High prevalence of hepatitis C in Dutch HIV-positive gay men

“The prevalence of hepatitis C infection among HIV-positive gay men attending a large Amsterdam sexual health clinic is 18% and rising, reported Anouk Urbanus at the XVII International AIDS Conference in Mexico City on August 7th.

Anonymous surveys were conducted at the clinic in May 2007, November 2007 and April 2008. A total of 3125 people took part in the survey, but almost four-fifths were heterosexual men and women, amongst whom hepatitis C prevalence was low at 0.3%. Moreover, prevalence was also low among HIV-negative gay men at 0.4% (2 of 532 men). However among HIV-positive gay men, 18% had hepatitis C (28 of 157 men). Comparing the results between the three surveys, prevalence rose from 15% to 17% and then to 21%. Just under a third of these men were unaware of their infection.” [Read more...](#)

“Please pay attention” to Hep C

Lone man markets message during Olympics

“For days now, Ten Xiaojun has stood beside a major street in Beijing — in the heart of the Olympic venues and under the watchful eye of security officials — and held up his placard, hoping to get noticed. Ten, a 30-year-old from Hunan Province — a plane flight away — believes Chinese officials should be doing more to educate the public on the perils of contracting Hepatitis C.” [Read more...](#)

Anesthesiologist allegedly gives hepatitis

“A New York anesthesiologist has been suspended and is accused in lawsuits of infecting patients with hepatitis B and C. City Health Department officials found that Dr. Brian Goldweber sloppily used the same syringe to give patients dosages from anesthesia vials already infected with hepatitis. This ‘double dipping’ allegedly contaminated the contents and helped spread the virus to at least 14 patients, the New York Post reported Sunday. ‘This was a very serious outbreak -- and it was preventable,’ said Dr. Sharon Balter, a city medical epidemiologist.” [Read more...](#)

County needle exchange gets one more year

Board of Supervisors approves \$100,000 for program

“Yolo County’s needle exchange program, active for one year, has generated some controversy this summer because of reports that used syringes were showing up in public parks. Despite the concerns, the Yolo County Board of Supervisors voted 3-2 earlier this month to allow the needle exchange to continue into its second year at a cost of \$100,000.” [Read more...](#)

Vertex Pharmaceuticals to start phase 3 “REALIZE” trial with telaprevir in treatment-failure HCV patients

“First HCV protease inhibitor in pivotal trial for this difficult to treat patient population Trial to enroll all major treatment-failure patient groups, including null responders, partial responders and relapsers Two telaprevir registration programs to address significant unmet need in treatment-naive and treatment-failure patients.” [Read more...](#)

Rapid progression of liver fibrosis in HIV-positive gay men recently infected with hepatitis C

“A US study has found that many HIV-positive gay men recently infected with hepatitis C virus have rapidly developed moderate-to-severe liver fibrosis. The study is published in the September 1st edition of the Journal of Infectious Diseases.

Most of the men became infected with hepatitis C through unprotected sex and the infection was only diagnosed because the patients had abnormal liver function tests. The study investigators suggest that HIV-positive gay men should be regularly screened for infection with hepatitis C, warning that ‘the implications of missing the diagnosis of acute hepatitis C virus infection in these patients are grave.’ [Read more...](#)

Liver transplant program established at Montefiore

“Area Residents Gain Access to High Quality Care as State Approves Only Program in The Bronx Patients who suffer from severe liver disease and need a liver transplant will no longer have to seek that highly specialized surgery and critically important follow-up care outside the borough of the Bronx. Area patients and their families now have access to this high-quality care locally, without having to travel long distances, as a result of the New York State Department of Health’s approval of the first and only liver transplant program in the Bronx, at Montefiore Medical Center (<http://www.montefiore.org>).” [Read more...](#)

Hep C story saved my life

“For 23 years Lesley Jenkins carried a virus that was slowly destroying her liver. Left untreated, it would probably have killed her. Doctors repeatedly missed the lethal infection. They told her she was overdoing things, it was arthritis and finally that she was depressed. But Lesley had hepatitis C – and thanks to The Sun she is now clear of the lethal bug. She insisted on a blood test for the disease after reading our exclusive interview with Body Shop founder Dame Anita Roddick, who caught hepatitis C from a blood transfusion.” [Read more...](#)

16.1% people tested positive for hepatitis (Rawalpindi, Pakistan)

“A free screening programme for the detection of Hepatitis B and C, conducted in Rawalpindi, has yielded alarming results, as 16.1 percent of the total cases tested from general public were found affected with the hepatitis virus.

Pakistan Green Task Force (PGTF) and Citi Lab jointly organized the programme in which almost 2,729 persons have, so far, been screened for hepatitis. Most of the cases visited the free camps to get themselves screened for hepatitis for the first time.” [Read more...](#)

Clovis patients possibly exposed to hepatitis, HIV

Some instruments used last week may not have been fully sterilized.

“Clovis patients must wait to learn whether they’re infected. Fourteen Clovis Community Medical Center patients -- some of whom were on the maternity ward -- may have been exposed to hepatitis and HIV last week when doctors used instruments that may not have been fully sterilized.

Although hospital officials say the risk of infection is remote, they have offered to test all the patients and doctors. So far, no infections have been found, said Michelle Van Valkenburg, director of communications for Community Medical Centers, which operates Clovis Community. She said she didn’t know how many remain to be tested or how many test results are pending.” [Read more...](#)

Life inspires “reality” in Neal’s blues

“Blues player Kenny Neal has dealt with enormous challenges in the past few years, from his hepatitis C diagnosis in 2006 to the deaths of his brother, father, sister and drummer in rapid

succession. Now, the Louisiana singer-guitarist is ready to get back to music with 'Let Life Flow,' his most personal CD. It's full of his homegrown 'swamp blues,' this time influenced by his struggles.

'Man, I had so much going on,' says Neal, who is now cured of hepatitis. 'I had been on the road for 30 years and, all of a sudden, I wasn't able to play anymore. I took time off for treatment and couldn't go out much. So I worked around the house and began putting a CD together about what I was going through. 'I'm sharing what I'm going through and letting people know they're not alone. And the response I'm getting back is amazing. People are opening up with their own problems, so it's healing for them, too.'" [Read more...](#)

State urges clinic's patients to be tested for hepatitis C

"The state Department of Public Health (NC) is asking people who received a nuclear stress test at Scotland Cardiology in Laurinburg between June 25, 2007, and Aug. 26, 2008, to get tested for the hepatitis C virus and other infectious agents that may be transmitted through unsafe injection practices.

A nuclear stress test involves injecting a radioactive substance into the bloodstream as a way to check for inadequate blood flow in the heart. A recent investigation of the clinic revealed that unsafe medical practices could have been used during the nuclear stress tests, possibly causing seven patients to acquire the disease. Dr. Matthew Block, a cardiologist at Scotland Cardiology and the city's mayor, agreed to quit performing the procedure, which could have infected seven of his patients with hepatitis C, according to an Aug. 27 disciplinary order from the state medical board." [Read more...](#)

New approach, old drug show promise against hepatitis C, research shows

"The fight against the liver disease hepatitis C has been at something of an impasse for years, with more than 150 million people currently infected, and traditional antiviral treatments causing nasty side effects and often falling short of a cure.

Using a novel technique, medical and engineering researchers at Stanford University have discovered a vulnerable step in the virus' reproduction process that in lab testing could be effectively targeted with an obsolete antihistamine.

The advance involves two new discoveries. One is that a protein called NS4B is instrumental in binding some of the genetic material, or RNA, and allowing the hepatitis C virus to replicate. The other is that the former anti-itching drug clemizole hydrochloride could hinder that protein, resulting in a tenfold decrease in virus replication with no apparent harm to infected liver-like cells. Because the drug has already been used by people, it is eligible for human testing." [Read more...](#)

CLINICAL TRIALS, COHORT STUDIES, PILOT STUDIES

Weight affect relapse rates in latinos with genotype 2/3 chronic hepatitis C (CHC) treated with peg IFN alfa-2a (Pegasys) 180 mcg/week and 800 mg daily of ribavirin for 24 weeks.

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BASIC AND APPLIED SCIENCE, PRE-CLINICAL STUDIES

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COMPLEMENTARY & ALTERNATIVE THERAPY

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