



Hepatitis C

HCCAP

WASHINGTON STATE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION (WSPHA) RESOLUTION ON CONTROL AND PREVENTION OF HEPATITIS C

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[Unanimously adopted by WSPHA October 2005.]

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- WHEREAS,** hepatitis C is the most common, blood-borne chronic viral infection in Washington and the United States; and
- WHEREAS,** at least 3.9 to 4.5 million Americans have been infected with the hepatitis C virus including 110,000 Washingtonians; and
- WHEREAS,** the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 30,000 new cases of hepatitis C infection occur annually in the United States, and the number of new cases has been increasing since 2001; and
- WHEREAS,** infection with the hepatitis C virus is at least 3 times more prevalent in the United States than infection with HIV, and the number of Washingtonians infected the hepatitis C virus is estimated to be eight times greater than the number infected with HIV; and
- WHEREAS,** 55-85% of persons infected with the hepatitis C virus become chronically infected, and chronic hepatitis C is the leading cause of chronic liver disease in the United States, which is one of the top ten killers of Americans 25 years of age and older; and
- WHEREAS,** chronic hepatitis C is a potentially life-threatening disease that may lead to cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer, and is the leading indication for adult liver transplants in the United States; and
- WHEREAS,** complications of chronic hepatitis are expected to rise dramatically by 2020 including a 16-32% increase in cirrhosis of the liver, a 106% increase in liver failure, an 81% rise in new cases of liver cancer, and a 180% increase in liver-related deaths; and
- WHEREAS,** chronic infection with the hepatitis C virus is associated with a several debilitating conditions outside the liver including type II diabetes mellitus, cryoglobulinemia, membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis, porphyria cutanea tarda, seronegative arthritis, Sjögren syndrome, autoimmune thyroiditis, lichen planus, Mooren corneal ulcers, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, polyarteritis nodosa, aplastic anemia, and non-Hodgkins lymphomas; and

- WHEREAS,** the majority of persons infected with the hepatitis C virus are unaware of their disease for as long as 10 to 20 years, until the symptoms of severe liver disease develop, and persons with the hepatitis C virus who are unaware of their disease are unknowing reservoirs for continued spread of the virus; and
- WHEREAS,** approximately one-third of all HIV-infected persons are coinfecting with the hepatitis C virus, and chronic liver disease associated with the hepatitis C virus is the leading cause of death for HIV-infected persons; and
- WHEREAS,** the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 10,000 Americans die each year of chronic hepatitis C-related disease, and predict a three-fold increase in the hepatitis C-related death rate by the year 2010; and
- WHEREAS,** no vaccine is currently available to prevent chronic hepatitis C, but medications are available to clear the hepatitis C virus from the body in up to 50% of people treated; and
- WHEREAS,** conservative estimates now place the costs of lost-productivity and medical care arising from HCV infection in the U.S. to be in excess of \$600 million annually, and such costs will undoubtedly increase without education and prevention efforts; and
- WHEREAS,** the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated, “Hepatitis C is a disease of major public health importance,” and recommends that hepatitis C testing should be offered routinely to persons at risk for hepatitis C and to anyone who wishes to know or is concerned regarding their HCV-infection status, and that testing should be accompanied by appropriate counseling and medical follow-up; and
- WHEREAS,** it is the goal of the Washington State Public Health Association to act as a statewide advocacy organization for the advancement of public health and the improvement of the public’s health;
- NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Washington State Public Health Association supports the full implementation of the Washington State Hepatitis C Strategic Plan and commits to ongoing participation in that implementation; and
- BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Washington State Public Health Association supports policy to increase federal, state, local, and private funding to implement the Washington State Hepatitis C Strategic Plan; and
- BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Washington State Public Health Association supports policy that addresses the public health impact of hepatitis C on Washington state residents.