

The Hepatitis C Education And Support Group Assistance Program for Patients and Healthcare Providers

Ronni Marks and Diannee Carden Glenn

BACKGROUND

The Hepatitis C Mentor and Support Group, Inc. was founded by a patient to address the lack of education and supportive services for people living with Hepatitis C and Co-infection, HIV/HCV. This includes helping Healthcare Providers to better understand how to work with all patients, including high risk populations, such as former and current drug users, the LGBTQ community, youth and women of child bearing age, from a non-clinical perspective.

METHODS

The Hepatitis C Education and Support Group Assistance Program was established to provide resources and services nationwide to hospitals, clinics, other organizations, and individuals wanting to establish or run Hepatitis C, and Co-infection HCV/HIV, educational patient support groups.

The services includes:

- Training and training materials on support group meeting facilitation, education on HCV and Co-infection, harm reduction strategies, and the importance of advocacy.
- One-on-one consultation with new or current facilitators is provided.
- A roster of experts to speak at group meetings
- An informational website (www.hepatitisCmsg.org), award winning blog, and social media updates.
- The HCMSG Patient Support Newsletter which is designed to help patients. It includes questions to ask medical providers, definitions of medical terms and how to read labs. It provides resources such as patient assistance programs, and information on treatments provided by medical advisors.
- Meetings and conference calls with medical providers and support group facilitators to share information, resources and best practices.
- Tele-Support: This training is also provided via conference call.

METHODS

The Healthcare Provider Support and Education Program is designed to help the provider better understand how to work with all patients, including high risk populations such as former and current drug users, the LGBTQ community, youth and women of child bearing age dealing with Hepatitis C, and Co infection HIV/HCV. While there are programs on this, they are from the perspective of the clinician. This program comes directly from the experiences of a Hepatitis C Patient and a Mother who lost her son to drugs.

The program provides trainings on:

- Learning about Hepatitis C and Co infection HIV/HCV and how it affects your practice.
- Understanding what the social determinants of health are in different communities.
- Helping patients manage health, emotional, and non-medical issues.
- Reducing the impact of stigmas in communities most at risk.
- Understanding why patients who are using can and should be treated for Hepatitis C.
- Best practices for making patients understand the risks using harm reduction strategies.
- Understanding ways to effectively work with high risk populations.

RESULTS

Educational groups and supportive patient mentoring services have been shown to be important elements of successful and cost effective medical care for patients with Hepatitis C and other chronic health conditions. These services improve the quality of life, as well as better health outcomes for individual patients.

The program has succeeded in motivating patients to seek treatment and adhere to it. In many cases, it has helped to reduce feelings of stigma, helping people to feel worthy. Empowering them to be in charge of their own health. Increasingly, we are extending our services to healthcare providers to educate them about best practices when working with diverse patient populations. To date, HCMSG has trained over 1,000 facilitators, who have in turn touched tens of thousands of lives across the United States



CONCLUSIONS

Community based organizations are able to make an impact with patients and providers. These programs provide the knowledge and tools to enable participants to continue this work in their various communities



SUPPORT

Support for these programs provided by Janssen Pharmaceutical, Gilead Sciences Inc., AbbVie Inc., Merck & Co Inc.

Contact Information

NAME Ronni Marks
TEL NO (917) 612-2731
EMAIL ronnimarks24@gmail.com

