

HIV + HEP

POLICY INSTITUTE

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Nation Must Do Better in Ensuring Patients Receive Hepatitis C Curative Drugs

Diagnosed People with Health Coverage Not Being Cured

Washington DC... Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released [data](#) that estimates that only one-third of people diagnosed with hepatitis C have been cured, despite the availability of groundbreaking medications with a nearly 100 percent cure rate. While the oral medications are easy to take and people are cured in 8-12 weeks, there are several barriers to accessing the curative drugs, according to the CDC.

“This situation is completely unacceptable. We have a cure for a serious infectious disease, but people who have taken the time to get tested and know they have hepatitis C are not being cured,” commented **Carl Schmid, executive director** of the **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute**. “The vast majority of these people have health coverage but payers such as private insurers, state Medicaid programs, and Medicare are erecting barriers to patient access by not covering medications or requiring cumbersome prior authorizations or imposing high patient cost-sharing. If the federal government is serious about ending hepatitis C, it needs to provide the leadership, particularly at CMS, and address these payer barriers.”

According to the CDC [report](#), 45 percent of people diagnosed with hepatitis C on Medicare, 31 percent of those on Medicaid, and only 40 percent of those with private insurance have been cured.

The CDC data also illustrate the need for a resourced federal program that provides the infrastructure to help guide people with hepatitis C from testing through cure. Currently, Congress provides only \$43 million to the CDC to carry out all hepatitis programs for the entire country. The Biden administration has proposed to increase that amount by \$11.5 million for next year.

“Underfunding CDC hepatitis programs is another reason why people with hepatitis C are not being cured,” continued **Schmid**. “At a time when some in Congress are pushing funding cuts, this is one area where an infusion of funds is desperately needed.”

The Biden administration, under the leadership of Francis Collins, has proposed a bold \$11 billion five-year national hepatitis C elimination program, which includes an alternative funding

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mechanism for the medications. The **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute** looks forward to Congressional consideration of this proposal but does not believe current payers that are required by law to cover these curative drugs should be left off the hook. Priority focus for a national hepatitis C elimination program should include providing medication access for the uninsured and infrastructure to conduct education, testing, and linkage to care.

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The **HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute** is a national, non-profit organization whose mission is to promote quality and affordable healthcare for people living with or at risk of HIV, hepatitis, and other serious and chronic health conditions.