

Illinois State Medical Society



September 11, 2014

The Honorable Michael McAuliffe
Illinois House of Representatives
Chairman, Hepatitis C Task Force
5515 N. East River Road
Chicago, IL 60656

Dear Representative McAuliffe and Honorable Members of the Hepatitis C Task Force:

Physician members of the Illinois State Medical Society (ISMS) applaud your successful efforts in gathering testimony and information to assist you in developing an action plan to (a) increase public awareness of the risk factors for the Hepatitis C virus; (b) improve access to screening and treatment for the virus; and (c) provide those infected with information about the prognosis, treatment options, and elevated risk of developing cirrhosis and liver cancer.

ISMS wants to partner with you and other stakeholders in efforts to increase awareness of Hepatitis C, improve access to screening and treatment, and ultimately reduce the number of people who acquire and suffer from the virus.

ISMS has committed and will continue to commit resources to educate physicians and patients about the virus including, the importance of screening consistent with the CDC and USPSTF screening guidelines; the importance of follow-up care; and the various treatments available to treat the disease. ISMS is also building support among primary care physicians and their professional organizations to further increase education and awareness efforts.

Below is a summary of ISMS' activities to date.

Education and Raising Awareness

- Regular alerts to our membership about the screening guidelines and the importance of screening targeted patient populations will be an ongoing part of ISMS member communications (Attachment A).
- An on-demand CME program on the updated CDC guidelines regarding screening and follow-up testing is in development and set to begin in October 2014.
- A public service announcement for radio airplay on the importance of screening consistent with updated CDC guidelines is in development.
- An ISMS website page is totally devoted to the issue of Hepatitis C (Attachment B).
https://www.isms.org/Resources/For_Physicians/HepatitisC/.
- ISMS prepared an article for publication in the Chicago Medical Society magazine for September 19, 2014 (Attachment C).

- ISMS has prepared and sent an article to county medical societies to use in their member communications (Attachment D).
- We will be publicizing the University of Chicago's CDC-funded project: Hepatitis C Community Alliance Screen and Treat in Chicago (HEPCCATT). This 4-year project begins October 1st and is part of the larger Project ECHO Chicago.

Advocacy

- ISMS has sent a letter (Attachment E) to the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services urging that Hepatitis C screening be added to the required screenings as part of each new Medicare beneficiary's wellness visit.
- ISMS will also urge all Illinois commercial insurance carriers to provide coverage for all relevant Hepatitis C screening and treatment, including Sovaldi and other advanced medications (letter to be sent late September, 2014).
- ISMS is coordinating efforts with primary care specialty societies such as the Illinois Academy of Family Physicians, the Illinois Osteopathic Medical Society, the Illinois Section of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Illinois Chapter of the American College of Physicians to develop additional educational materials for a greater cross section of primary care professionals and facilities.

Our efforts also compliment efforts being taken at the federal level. In February 2014, the Office of HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease Policy and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in conjunction with all of the federal agencies and offices, developed an *Updated Action Plan for the Prevention, Care & Treatment of Viral Hepatitis*. This action plan establishes a goal to increase the proportion of persons who are aware of their Hepatitis C virus from 45% to 65%, and to reduce the number of new cases of the virus by 25%.

To do this, the action plan established six priority areas in which its actions are grouped.

1. Educating providers and communities to reduce health disparities.
2. Improving screening, care, and treatment to prevent liver disease and cancer.
3. Strengthening surveillance to detect viral Hepatitis transmission and disease.
4. Eliminating transmission of vaccine-preventable viral Hepatitis.
5. Reducing viral Hepatitis caused by drug use behaviors.
6. Protecting patients and workers from health care-associated viral Hepatitis.

The authors of the action plan, which include the CDC, have committed to working closer with professional associations to "leverage the expertise and reach of these organizations as well as support consistent practices for prevention, care and treatment."

The action plans calls on non-governmental stakeholders, such as ISMS, to contribute to these activities in a variety of ways. Some of those ways include:

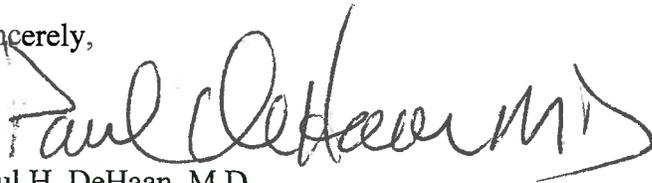
1. Sharing the CDC Viral Hepatitis Risk Assessment and fact sheets with family, friends, colleagues, and community members.
2. Advising in the development of professional training and tools or public education and awareness activities.
3. Developing and supporting training opportunities for health care professionals and others, and encouraging participation.
4. Helping to disseminate professional tools and public education messages and materials to relevant audiences.

As outlined above, ISMS activities are consistent with the federal action plan and we will continue to promote programs that increase education and awareness about Hepatitis C, the importance of screening and appropriate treatment.

ISMS has previously stated our opposition to legislative initiatives that would mandate Hepatitis C screening based on CDC guidelines. Guidelines are meant to be used as clinical tools for health care professionals. They are not drafted with the intent that they will be mandated by law. Mandates interfere with the physician-patient relationship and remove a physician's autonomy to treat the patient as an individual who presents with unique medical needs at a particular office visit. Mandates also fail to keep pace with advancements in medicine, and with public health trends. There are over 7,500 guidelines issued by a variety of government agencies and medical specialty organizations. These guidelines are important to the practice of medicine, revised and updated frequently, but should serve only as guidelines and not as permanent mandates. The federal action plan, for instance, does not include mandating guidelines in its recommendations.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide you with information on what ISMS is doing to increase awareness of Hepatitis C, and the importance of testing and treatment. We look forward to working with you in the continued effort to reduce the incidence of Hepatitis C and to cure this disease.

Sincerely,



Paul H. DeHaan, M.D.
Chair, Board of Trustees

Enclosures (7)

cc: William A. McDade, M.D., Ph.D.
Scott A. Cooper, M.D.
Alexander R. Lerner
State Senator John Mulroe
LaMar Hasbrouck, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Illinois Department of Public Health
Julie Hamos, Director, Department of Healthcare and Family Services
Michelle R.B. Saddler, Secretary, Department of Human Services
S.A. Godinez, Director, Department of Corrections



Physician Advocate

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Top ISMS Headlines August 29, 2014

- [Gov. Signs Legislation for Patient-Friendly Power of Attorney Form](#)
- [Issue Briefs Tame the Tidal Wave of New Regs, Laws](#)
- [Time Sensitive: Revalidate Your Medicare Enrollment](#)
- [A Word of Caution about Out-of-State Licenses](#)
- [Hep C Screening](#)
- [Combating Opioid Misuse, Abuse and Overdoses in Illinois](#)
- [Important Update on West Nile Virus](#)
- [Conquer Credentialing Woes with New On-Demand Course](#)
- [Make a Splash with JPB Medical Marketing Solutions](#)

ISMS offices will be closed Monday, September 1 in observance of Labor Day.



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Act Now: Review Your Sunshine Data

Physicians must review certain payments and items of value given to them by medical device, biologicals and drug manufacturers, disclosed to CMS as a requirement of the *Sunshine Act*.

If you identify any inaccuracies, you must dispute the data by **Sept. 10, 2014**.

LEGISLATIVE

Gov. Signs Legislation for Patient-Friendly Power of Attorney Form

The wait is over! Governor Quinn signed an ISMS-initiative into law that simplifies the power of attorney for health care form.

[>>Read more](#)



ADVOCACY

Issue Briefs Tame the Tidal Wave of New Regs, Laws

ISMS knows you don't have the time to delve into the minutia

ISMS President William A. McDade, MD, PhD:

[Let's Tackle the Doctor Shortage Now](#)

Attention County 

of new health care regulations and laws and sift out what pertains to your practice.

That's where our *Issue Briefs* come in! Check out our substantial issues library covering the latest updates on Medicaid mandatory managed care, "incident to," Medicare Advantage Plans, certified versus non-certified medical assistants and much more.

ISMS' *Issue Briefs* are an exclusive and popular member benefit; login required. Practice managers employed by ISMS members may also obtain login credentials.

Time Sensitive: Revalidate Your Medicare Enrollment

Have you received a yellow envelope in your snail mail from National Government Services (NGS) requesting that you "revalidate" your Medicare enrollment?

If so, you are encouraged to submit a completed revalidation application as soon as possible - no later than 60 days from the envelope's postmark date. With a timely response, you can avoid payment holds or loss of billing privileges.

Two options are available for revalidating:

- Internet-based Provider Enrollment Chain and Ownership System (PECOS)
- CMS-855 paper application

If you choose to revalidate via PECOS, [access these helpful tips](#).

A Word of Caution about Out-of-State Licenses

If you practiced medicine in another state, here's what you need to know concerning your out-of-state license(s).

>>[Read more](#)

Have questions on the above-mentioned topics? Please contact the ISMS Advocacy Team at 800-782-4767 ext. 1470 or [by email](#).

PUBLIC HEALTH

Hep C Screening

Medical Society Leaders:



RSVP today for your [September 19 meeting!](#)

Fast Facts about Labor Day

Labor Day is dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers.



The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, **Sept. 5, 1882**, in New York City.



In 1894 President Grover Cleveland declared Labor Day a national holiday.

Although earlier dates varied, Labor Day has been celebrated on the first Monday of September since the 1894 federal law.

Source: www.dol.gov/labor/day/what-is-it.htm



ISMS urges all primary care physicians to be familiar with the [CDC's Hepatitis C screening guidelines](#) and to screen populations susceptible for carrying the virus.



Access our comprehensive [Hepatitis C web page](#).

Combating Opioid Misuse, Abuse and Overdoses in Illinois

Any Illinois prescriber can access ISMS' free on-demand webinar on opioid risk evaluation mitigation strategy. CME offered.

[Extended Release/Long Acting Opioid Risk Evaluation Mitigation Strategy](#)

Important Update on West Nile Virus

The Illinois Department of Public Health has confirmed Illinois' [first human West Nile virus case](#) for 2014.

Need more info? Contact the ISMS Advocacy Team at 800-782-4767 ext. 1470 or [by email](#).

EDUCATION

Conquer Credentialing Woes with New On-Demand Course

Credentialing "goes with the territory" when hiring physicians and physician extenders. But this necessary documentation of credentialing data doesn't have to be so tedious. Learn more with a new on-demand course, [Credentialing Doesn't Have to Be Hard](#), available 24/7 from your home or office.



Check out [numerous other online CME activities](#) addressing hot topics including social media in a health care setting, identify theft, defensive medicine, physician stress, charting your professional path for either hospital employment or independent practice, and much more.

Peruse the entire stable of on-demand courses, webinars and upcoming live seminars at the [ISMS Education Center](#).

Questions? Contact the ISMS Division of Health Policy Research and Advocacy [via email](#) or call 800-782-4767 ext. 1470.

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Make a Splash with JPB Medical Marketing Solutions

Patients today are Internet savvy - one click and they're reading countless online reviews and

comments about physicians and medical practices.

So establish your online presence with a targeted marketing strategy designed by JPB Medical Marketing Solutions, an ISMS Benefit Partner. Members offices will receive a 10 percent discount, regardless if paying a monthly retainer or per hour.

[Learn more.](#)

Illinois State Medical Society | communications@isms.org | www.isms.org
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Hepatitis C: The Silent Epidemic Gains a Voice

ISMS member, Rashmi K. Chugh, MD, who serves on the Council for Medical Services, testified last week before the Illinois Hepatitis C Task Force on behalf of ISMS.

During her testimony she stated that ISMS recognizes the "silent epidemic" that Hepatitis C virus (HCV) poses to Illinois and our country. ISMS is developing educational materials, accredited continuing medical education, and a communications plan to raise awareness about this disease among physicians and patients, which includes:

- Publicizing the current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) guidelines on hepatitis C screening and urging primary care physicians to adhere to these important guidelines.
- Educating members about the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' National Coverage Determination process for screening Hepatitis C virus in adults
- Developing strategies to provide HCV-positive persons with greater access to various treatments and therapeutic options.

ISMS intends to work with Medicare, Medicaid and private payers to ensure that screening and confirmatory tests are covered by the insurers. New drugs to treat Hepatitis C are very expensive, costing as much as \$85,000 for a course of treatment. Private insurance plans - if they choose to cover these newer, costlier treatments - may impose significant co-pays and co-insurance on affected patients, and ISMS will advocate for more affordable access to these medications.



Dr. Chugh (right) testifies before the Illinois Hepatitis C Task Force.

Dr. Chugh is aboard-certified family medicine physician currently serving as Medical Officer of the DuPage County Health Department, working on behalf of the public health infrastructure that serves as a safety net for many of Illinois' patients in need.

ISMS Top Headlines July 18, 2014

- ISMS Successful in Obtaining Increased Reimbursement for Illinois Workers' Comp
- Hepatitis C: The "Silent Epidemic" Gains a Voice
- Be Familiar with "Incident To" if You Hire Physician Extenders

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For Patients

For Practice Managers

For Residents

For Students

For County Executives

Annual Meeting and House of Delegates

Hepatitis C

Are You Screening Your Adult Patients for Hepatitis C?

The Illinois legislature is considering ways in which to increase the rate of Hepatitis C screenings by physicians, including legislation that mandates that primary care physicians offer screenings to those persons included in the CDC's targeted groups.

The Illinois State Medical Society (ISMS) urges all primary care physicians to be familiar with the [CDC's Hepatitis C screening guidelines](#) and to screen populations susceptible for carrying Hepatitis C including:

- All patients born between 1945 - 1965.
- Current or former injection drug users, including those who injected only once many years ago.
- Recipients of clotting factor concentrates made before 1987, when more advanced methods for manufacturing those products were developed.
- Recipients of blood transfusions or solid organ transplants before July 1992, when better testing of blood donors became available.
- Chronic hemodialysis patients.
- Persons with known exposures to HCV, such as health care workers after needle sticks involving HCV-positive blood and recipients of blood or organs from a donor who tested HCV-positive.
- Persons with HIV infection.
- Children born to HCV-positive mothers.

ISMS has assembled resources, below, to help you, your staff and your patients to learn more about the Hepatitis C virus, its risks, current screening guidelines, and treatment options.

What is Hepatitis C?

- Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA)
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIH)

Hepatitis C for Healthcare Professionals

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Hep C Information for Health Professionals
- Hepatitis C Surveillance
- Laboratory Testing for Healthcare Professionals
- Preventing Transmission of Hepatitis C Amongst Hemodialysis Patients

Laboratory Testing for Hepatitis C

- CDC Laboratory Testing for Healthcare Professionals
- CDC Testing for Hepatitis C Viral Infection
- List of CLIA Waived Tests
- FDA Approval of CLIA Waived Hep C Blood Tests

Coverage of Hepatitis C Screening and Confirmatory Testing

- CMS Decision Memo for Hep C Screening
- United State Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) Recommendation for Hep C Screening

Payer Pharmaceutical Policies

- Medicare
- Illinois Medicaid
- Aetna
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois
- Cigna
- Health Alliance
- Healthlink
- Humana
- United Healthcare

Hepatitis C for Patients

- CDC General Fact Sheet
- What to Expect When Getting Tested
- Information on Testing and Diagnosis
- Living with Chronic Hepatitis C
- Why Baby Boomers Should Get Tested
- Viral Hepatitis information for Gay and Bisexual Men
- Spanish version documents

United States Department of Veterans Affairs (Health Professionals and Patients)

- Department of Veterans Affairs National Hepatitis C Program
- Treatment for Hepatitis C (video clip)
- Hepatitis and Your Liver (video)

Hepatitis C In the News

- Health Affairs
- Kaiser Health News
- Medical Economics
- RAND Corporation
- Reuters
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- WebMD

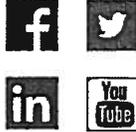
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ISMS Provides Resources to Curb Opioid Abuse, Hepatitis C

As Illinois' premier physician organization, the Illinois State Medical Society is committed not only to serving our members, but also to keeping our patients healthy and safe. This year, two ongoing public health issues have arisen as particular concerns for physicians, and ISMS is here to help.

Opioid Abuse

Opioid abuse and misuse are a growing national problem. The statistics are sobering: according to the CDC, opioids are responsible for 3 out of every 4 pharmaceutical overdose deaths.

Physicians in Illinois prescribe fewer opioids than in most other states. However, our *rate of growth* for prescribing these drugs is now outpacing many other states. Physicians serve an important role as gatekeepers to legally prescribed opioid medications; it is our responsibility to understand the medications we are prescribing, to ensure the prescriptions are clinically appropriate, and to follow professional guidelines for opioid therapies.

Regardless of how we compare to other states, Illinois physicians must be aggressive in helping prevent prescription drug abuse, which frequently leads to heroin addiction and can often result in death.

ISMS intends to lead the charge toward safer opioid prescribing in Illinois.

If we don't, we can be certain that regulators and legislators will develop restrictive policies that may interfere with the practice of medicine. Already, a task force composed of Illinois legislators has been considering several proposals to combat opioid abuse, including burdensome physician mandates related to opioid prescribing.

There are several steps we can take as individual physicians to curb prescription opioid diversion and abuse, including preferential use of non-opioids and limiting the supply of pills according to the estimated duration of the pain.

Fortunately, we don't have to go it alone. Prescribers can use Illinois' Prescription Monitoring Program to ensure patients aren't "doctor shopping" as a means to feed an addiction.¹ There are many other free resources available to prescribing physicians, as well as continuing medical education courses that address opioid diversion and abuse.

ISMS has compiled these materials on our opioid resource page, at www.isms.org/opioids. This page includes:

- Access to free CME content produced by the Providers' Clinical Support System for Opioid Therapies network, an AMA-backed umbrella organization committed to educating health professionals on the safe and effective use of opioid medications;
- ISMS' own free CME course on the responsible prescribing of opioids, available on demand to ANY prescriber;

¹ <https://www.ilpmp.org/>

- Links to several of the prescribing guidelines and tools that have been developed by trusted organizations like the Federation of State Medical Boards, the American Academy of Pain Management, and the CDC.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C (HCV) may not grab headlines the way other infectious diseases often do, but there is no vaccine, and there are approximately 4 million HCV chronic carriers in the U.S. – 70 percent of whom will develop chronic liver disease.

Like opioid prescribing, Hepatitis C is also a target for legislative intervention, with some legislators seeking to *mandate* screening for all at-risk patients. ISMS remains opposed to these attempts to legislate the practice of medicine.

However, because many people infected with HCV have no symptoms but may still transmit the infection to others, routine testing of at-risk patients is important. Patient groups who should be routinely tested include:

- All persons born between 1945 and 1965;
- Persons who have ever injected illegal drugs (even if only one time);
- Persons who were ever on chronic renal dialysis;
- Persons with persistently elevated liver function tests;
- Persons who received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992;
- Children born to HCV-positive mothers; and more.

The Illinois State Medical Society urges all primary care physicians to familiarize themselves with the CDC's Hepatitis C screening guidelines.² ISMS has assembled resources to help you, your staff and your patients to learn more about the Hepatitis C virus, its risks, current screening guidelines, and treatment options. These materials may be found on www.isms.org, under Patient & Member Resources.

Thank you for helping keep your patients safe.

² <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf12/hepc/hepcfinalrs.htm>

From: Dr. DeHaan
Sent: Wednesday, August 27, 2014 4:10 PM
Cc: Lerner, Alexander
Subject: ISMS' Column on Hepatitis C Screening and Opioid Prescribing
Importance: High

Dear Colleagues:

Lawmaking and patient care commonly intersect in Springfield. A recent example can be found in ISMS' advocacy on Hepatitis C screening and opioid prescribing, two topics that have recently been in the news and on the minds of General Assembly members.

Our advocacy team has been working with interested lawmakers to ensure that any legislation developed on these issues does not result in unintended consequences for patient care. We are also working to make sure that physicians understand both of these issues and our roles in promoting Hepatitis C screening and safe opioid prescribing.

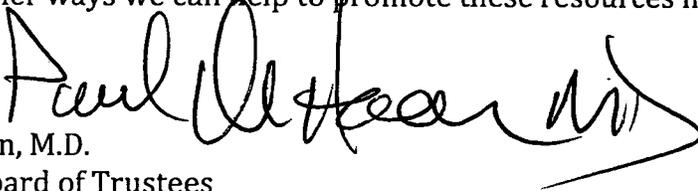
Numerous resources can be found on these and other topics at www.isms.org/Resources/ForPhysicians/. Further materials will be developed and added in the months ahead.

ISMS has also prepared a column (attached) for your county society bulletin, medical staff newsletter or other physician-focused publications in your community. **Thank you in advance for publishing this update.**

If there are other ways we can help to promote these resources in your county, please be in touch.

Sincerely,

Paul H. DeHaan, M.D.
Chair, ISMS Board of Trustees



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²<https://www.ilpmp.org/>

Illinois State Medical Society



September 8, 2014

Marilyn B. Tavenner
Administrator
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building, Room 445-G
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Administrator Tavenner:

On behalf of the physician members of the Illinois State Medical Society (ISMS), I am writing to you regarding a matter of concern to Illinois physicians that involves the screening of high-risk patients for the Hepatitis C virus. The ISMS is committed to educating Illinois physicians on the importance of Hepatitis C screening, detection, and treatment of high-risk patients as well as soliciting the assistance of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) with our initiative since research demonstrates that a large number of Hepatitis C-positive patients may also be Medicare beneficiaries.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) there are an estimated 3,200,000 people with chronic Hepatitis C. While Hepatitis C can manifest as an acute ailment and resolve without treatment, individuals who become infected with Hepatitis C most often remain chronic or asymptomatic and laboratory tests such as a liver function test can result as normal despite a person carrying the virus. Approximately 75-85% of those individuals testing positive for the Hepatitis C virus become chronically infected and, if left untreated, the Hepatitis C causes liver damage, cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer.

The CDC recommends Hepatitis C screening in the following populations:

- **Patients born between 1945 and 1965**
- **Current or former injection drug users**
- **Recipients of clotting factor concentrates made prior to 1987**
- **Recipients of blood transfusions or solid organ transplants prior to July 1992**
- **Chronic hemodialysis patients**
- **Persons with known exposures to Hepatitis C virus**
- **Persons with human immunodeficiency virus**
- **Children born to Hepatitis C virus-positive mothers**

Every 65-year old entering the Medicare program today falls into the cohort of persons born between 1945-65.

The ISMS believes, therefore, that an optimal time to screen Medicare beneficiaries for Hepatitis C is during the *Welcome to Medicare Exam* - also known as the Initial Preventive Physician Exam (IPPE) - or the Annual Wellness Visit (AWV). These two episodes of care represent a common denominator

between the primary care provider and patient – if conditioned appropriately, primary care providers could perform the screening at either of these preventive visits.

The ISMS is requesting that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services work with Congress to modify Section 1861 of the Social Security Act to explicitly include Hepatitis C screening as a component to the Medicare Initial Preventive Physical Exam (IPPE) or Annual Wellness Visit (AWV). The ISMS recognizes that the Hepatitis C screening is included under the *Additional Preventive Services* category of the Act and per United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) Grade B recommendations for one-time preventive screenings. However, our patients are best served when their primary care physicians have specific preventive screening guidance for preventive and annual wellness exams, especially in instances where epidemiological data demonstrates high occurrence of the Hepatitis C virus in patients born between 1945 and 1965, recipients of clotting factor concentrates prior to 1987 and blood transfusions or solid organ transplants prior to July 1992, and chronic hemodialysis patients.

The ISMS also requests that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services provide education on Hepatitis C screening and coverage to providers and patients through its Medicare.gov web site. This might include *Your Guide to Medicare Preventive Services*, *Medicare Coverage of Kidney Dialysis and Kidney Transplant Services Guide*, *Kidney Disease Education Program*, as well as quick reference information for providers including *The ABC's of Providing the Initial Preventive Physical Examination (IPPE)*, the provider internet claims manual system, and national and local coverage determinations. Additionally, CMS should offer direction to Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs), Medicare Part C/Medicare Advantage carriers, and Medicare supplemental insurance contractors on the processing of claims associated with Hepatitis C screening.

The Illinois State Medical Society will continue to advocate for our physicians and their patients through education and policy suggestions on the detection and treatment of Hepatitis C in high-risk populations. We hope that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services will join us in our efforts. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact David Porter at 312/580-2468 and davidporter@isms.org.

Sincerely,



Paul H. DeHaan, M.D.
Chair, Board of Trustees

cc: William A. McDade, M.D., Ph.D.
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