

Hepatitis Health

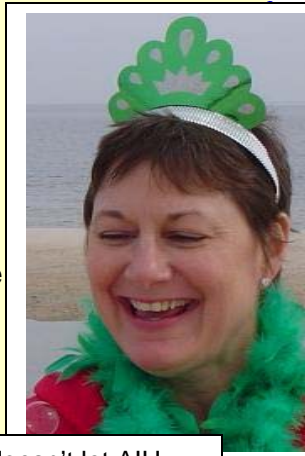
Autoimmune Hepatitis

By Maggie Hoomes, M. Ed., DOH Government Operations Consultant II
Public Health Preparedness, Training & Exercise



Putting a face on autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) isn't easy. It's a rare form of hepatitis and liver disease in which the body's immune system attacks liver cells, according to the National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse.

Inflammation of the liver, or hepatitis, is caused by this immune response. A genetic factor may make some people more susceptible to autoimmune diseases, though the disease affects mostly women (about 70 percent), according to researchers. AIH is usually quite serious and, if not treated, gets worse over time. While not curable, AIH is not always terminal.



Maggie Hoomes doesn't let AIH stop her from having a good time on her birthday.

Autoimmune hepatitis is typically chronic, meaning it can last for years, and leads to cirrhosis (scarring and hardening of the liver). Eventually, liver failure can result and a liver transplant is required. Autoimmune hepatitis is classified as type 1 or type 2. In North America, Type 1 is the most common form. It can occur at any age, but most often starts in adolescence or young adulthood.

Additional medical markers presenting in Type I AIH patients include other autoimmune disorders, such as: type 1 diabetes, thyroiditis, Graves' disease, and ulcerative colitis. Less common, Type 2 autoimmune hepatitis typically affects girls aged two to 14, although adults can have it too.

Besides myself, I didn't know of anyone who had ever had AIH. I searched my family's medical history, and I could not find the presence of AIH or liver disease anywhere. I wanted to find AIH survivor stories for my personal inspiration, and low and behold, I discovered two inspiring ones.



The ribbon for autoimmune hepatitis

In a 2006 *USA Today* article, I learned that the actress, Shelley Fabares, is an AIH survivor and a liver transplant survivor as well. By all Internet accounts, Ms. Fabares is thriving and in good health despite having AIH. I was amazed to learn that in cases of successful liver transplants, the recovering AIH patient may not experience AIH disease symptoms with the new liver, according to the American Liver Foundation.

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Autoimmune Hepatitis continued

Being an alumna of The University of South Carolina and an avid baseball fan, I was delighted to learn that a fellow Gamecock, Landon Powell, is an AIH survivor according to an article in *The State* (subsequently, his story was also referenced on the Gogamecock.com website on Monday, January 4, 2010). Mr. Powell is making his major league baseball debut as the catcher for the Oakland Athletics.

When stricken with a life-threatening illness like AIH and upon learning that the disease isn't curable and potentially terminal (if not properly managed with medication), it's easy to become depressed and lethargic. What helped me was finding sources of inspiration and good medical resources for learning about the disease. Having outlets for channeling the fears and taking a vigilant quest for information are the best medicine needed to take control of AIH and any unexpected medical diagnosis.

If you want to learn more about AIH, visit: <http://www.liverfoundation.org/education/info/aihep/>

Words Can Wound

By April Crowley

I recently read an article by Lucinda K. Porter entitled "Healthwise: Words that Wound, Words that Heal" in the August issue of the *HCV Advocate* newsletter. It reminded me of how many times I've put my foot in my mouth because I was trying to make another person feel better.

The article states that sometimes well-intended words can cause pain. She gave an example of when she was on hepatitis C (HCV) treatment, and someone said to her, "You don't look sick." She was nauseous, depressed and irritable. Porter states that it took every ounce of restraint not to say, "And you don't look stupid or careless." Sometimes, according to Porter, people don't look sick even when they are gravely ill. People's comments are well-intended, but often ill-spoken.

Standard hepatitis C treatment can be weekly shots and daily pills for a year or more. The treatment can cause nausea, depression, rashes and other painful symptoms.

I've known several people who have been on HCV treatment. I ask them how they're doing, and they usually don't hesitate to tell me how miserable they are. Some even go into quite a bit of detail. I've learned to just say, "I'm sorry you're going through this. Is there anything I can do?" I provide examples for them and offer to babysit their kids, go to the grocery store, pick up their meds, etc. Even something as simple as taking their garbage can to the curb can be extremely helpful.

Most of us know better than to say to someone on HCV treatment, "You look really bad!" I think it's human nature to want to make others feel better emotionally, so instead, we compliment them. We just need to remember to be careful about what we say.

Porter gives the following advice when talking to someone who is sick:

- Be compassionate.
- Offer support.
- Don't tell them about a worse experience.
- Don't tell them how to feel.
- Do listen. Sometime we communicate far more with sincere, attentive listening, than we do with words.

She adds, "No matter which side of the thermometer you are on, we can choose words that inflict pain or soothe the soul; it just takes awareness, thoughtfulness and practice."

For more details, and to read Porter's article in its entirety, go to: <http://www.hcvadvocate.org>

Many Children With Hepatitis C Are Missed

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/digestive-disorders/articles/2010/05/02/many-kids-with-hepatitis-c-are-missed.html>

Many children with hepatitis C go undiagnosed and untreated, which can lead to severe liver damage later in life, a new study warns.

Researchers from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine noted that national data show that between 0.2 percent and 0.4 percent of children in the United States are infected with hepatitis C. Based on that data, they thought they would find about 12,155 cases of pediatric infection in Florida, yet only 1,755 cases were identified, a mere 14.4 percent of the expected number of cases.

"Our study showed a lack of adequate identification of hepatitis C virus infection in children that could be widespread throughout the nation," said lead researcher Dr. Aymin Delgado-Borrego, a pediatric gastroenterologist and assistant professor of pediatrics. Hepatitis C is like a "ticking bomb," she said. "It seems harmless until it explodes." Most children and adults infected with hepatitis C do not have symptoms or only nonspecific symptoms, such as fatigue or abdominal pain, Delgado-Borrego said.

Delgado-Borrego chose Florida for the study because it is one of the few states that requires all cases of the infection to be reported to the local health department. "Not only was there a lack of proper identification, but among the children that have been identified the percentage of those receiving medical care is extremely and unacceptably low," she said. Based on these data, Delgado-Borrego's group found only about 1.2 percent of children with hepatitis C were receiving treatment by a pediatric hepatologist.

Most young children get the infection from their mothers while in the womb. That accounts for about 60 percent of the infections in young children, Delgado-Borrego said. Teenagers can get it through IV drug use and other substance abuse, she added.

So why are so many kids missed? According to Delgado-Borrego, there's a widespread lack of awareness of the condition and adequate screening is not often done. Moreover, children are too often not referred to treatment.

"Primary care doctors should screen all children who are at risk for hepatitis C infection, such as those whose mothers are infected," Delgado-Borrego said. In addition, infected children should be referred to specialists, she added. "Early identification of pediatric hepatitis C infection would likely help us cure the infection in over 50 percent of children that currently have it," Delgado-Borrego pointed out. "This would save children from liver damage as well as possible liver failure, liver cancer and even early death," she added.

Dr. Marc Siegel, an associate professor of medicine at New York University, said early diagnosis of hepatitis C is very important, especially in children. "Because if kids have it they have a lifetime of exposure to it, so the chances of damage to the liver is very high," he explained. Hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver transplantation, Siegel noted.



Dr. Delgado-Borrego

Shine a Light on Hepatitis Peeps: Isabel Anasco, Alachua CHD

I was born in Bethesda, Maryland. My father was in the US Navy and my mother was a homemaker. When my father retired from the Navy, we went back home to the Philippines where I grew up and went to school. I have one brother who lives in Indiana and one sister who lives in Iowa.

I graduated with a BS in nursing from the University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center (I know, it's long!) in the Philippines. After graduation, I moved back to the United States to pursue my nursing career. My first job as an RN was in Mercy Catholic Hospital in Philadelphia, PA for one year. The family moved to Indiana and I worked at the Indiana University Medical Center for three years. For the next 20 some years, I was a stay-at-home mom, taking care of my family and home schooling my children.

In 1990, I moved to Ocala, Florida, with my sons. I worked at the Marion County Health Department (CHD) for 12 years in Communicable Diseases, TB, the Reddick Clinic, and Immunizations. I transferred to the Alachua CHD in 2002 and worked as a clinic nurse and clinic supervisor, and in 2007, I landed back in communicable diseases. I have worked for the state of Florida for a little over 20 years. I love public health, especially epidemiology. I love to work on Epi cases and conduct Epi investigations, just like a detective! I have lots of enthusiasm for educating the community about infectious diseases.

Aside from epidemiology, I'm also the Hepatitis Program Coordinator for the Alachua CHD. I believe educating and counseling members of the community are an integral part of my work. We need to emphasize the importance of preventing diseases, changing lifestyles, and routine medical care. I also enjoy working with the Perinatal Hepatitis B Program. Building a rapport with a pregnant client and her family is very rewarding.

I have three sons. David is the eldest. He and his wife and four children are missionaries in the Philippines. My second son, Eric, went home to be with the Lord in 1995 when he was 22 years old. Rey, the youngest, is a high school teacher in Ocala.

My passion is the mission field. I have gone on evangelistic and medical mission trips since 1985. I try to go every other year. My church does outreach in the Philippines, Ecuador, Kenya, and India. Last year, I was in the Philippines and worked with the children's feeding program in the mountains of Bukidnon. My vision in the near future is to be a full-time missionary nurse.

I am very much involved with my church, Present Truth Ministries, in Ocala. We do various fund-raising activities to raise money for our mission outreach.

In my spare time, I love to read and take my ladies group (senior citizens) out for a road trip. My all-time favorite authors are C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. Of course, I have the book and DVDs of *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*! I prefer non-fiction books from conservative authors. I also love to cook, and do it on a regular basis whenever we have church dinners.



Isabel riding the "Jeepney" in the Philippines.

Jeepneys are the most popular means of public transportation in the Philippines. They were originally made from US military jeeps left over from World War II and are well known for their flamboyant decoration and crowded seating. They have also become a symbol of Philippine culture. Jeepney is a portmanteau word of "jeep" and "Jitney."



A picture of a Jeepney

More photos on page 5

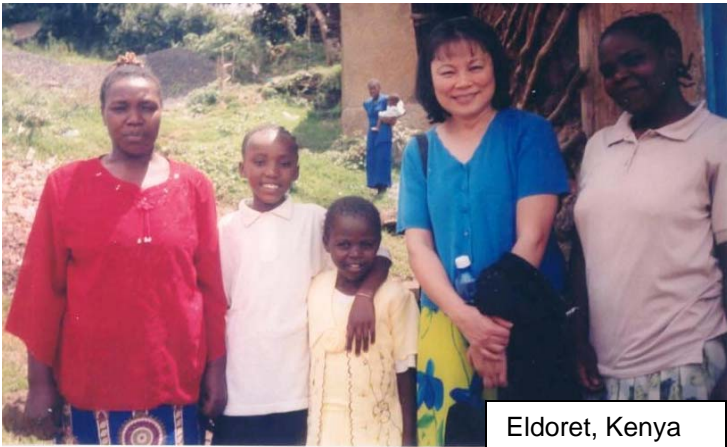
Isabel Anasco's photo album



Isabel (far right) with her three sons, L to R: Rey, David, & Eric



In Ecuador with Quechua Indians



Eldoret, Kenya



Isabel assessing a baby in the Philippines

IAC Updates Management of Chronic Hepatitis B in Adults

The Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) recently updated "Management of Chronic Hepatitis B in Adults." This one-page summary of management of people with chronic hepatitis B virus infection was reviewed by the author, Brian McMahon, MD. Dr. McMahon is an internal medicine specialist and medical director of the Liver Disease and Hepatitis Program at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Anchorage, Alaska. To access this updated handout, go to: <http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p2161.pdf>

Immunization Action Coalition

Vaccination Information
for Healthcare Professionals

IAC's Handouts for Patients and Staff web section offers healthcare professionals and the public approximately 250 free English-language handouts (many also available in translation), which they encourage website users to print out, copy, and distribute widely. To access all of IAC's free handouts, go to: <http://www.immunize.org/handouts>

PrideFest 2010 Fort Lauderdale



On March 13th and 14th, the Hepatitis Program at the Broward County Health Department (CHD) participated in PrideFest 2010 in Fort Lauderdale.

PrideFest is a celebration and tribute to the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender community and its unique culture. Free **hepatitis A and B vaccines**, along with educational materials, were provided all weekend long. This two-day event marked its 33rd year in Fort Lauderdale.

Broward CHD's display

Volunteer Manatee Promotes Hepatitis Prevention

By Bridgette Halliburton

It is time for the clowns to come out of hiding and start attending several back to school events and health fairs throughout Bradenton. We have a game wheel where people get to spin the wheel, answer one of our easy health questions, and win a prize.

We really want the community to learn about good health and **hepatitis prevention** when they come to our table. Below is a picture from our last event in June at the Boys and Girls Club Health Fair. The non-clown people in the picture are our fellow AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers that we have recruited to spread the word about hepatitis prevention.



Left to right: Daisy the Clown, Joy the Clown, Grandma Linda, Brenda Freeman, Nina Wiley, and Karen Carpenter.

Hepatitis B Linked to Lymphoma

<http://in.reuters.com/article/idINTRE6725TQ20100803>

Hepatitis B was already known to cause liver cancer and some scientists had suspected it might cause lymphoma, too. The study, published in *Lancet Oncology*, confirms this. Hepatitis C is also linked to lymphoma.

The blood cancer is not common and widespread vaccination against the viruses is unlikely to affect non-Hodgkin lymphoma rates much, the researchers noted. But it may be possible to treat the virus and help non-Hodgkin lymphoma patients, they said.

Dr. Eric Engels of the U.S. National Cancer Institute and Sun Ha Jee of Yonsei University in Seoul studied the records of more than 600,000 people in South Korea, where hepatitis B was extremely common before a vaccination campaign began in 1995.

Of these, 53,000, or about 9 percent, had evidence of hepatitis B infection. After 14 years, rates of non-Hodgkin lymphoma were more common among the infected people -- 19.4 cases per 100,000 people compared to 12.3 per 100,000 who did not have hepatitis B.

Viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer and the most common reason for liver transplantation, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). An estimated 350 million people worldwide are infected with hepatitis B virus.

Researchers think both hepatitis B and C may cause lymphoma by over-stimulating the immune system as it tries to fight off the liver infection.

Goodbye Nosipho Beaufort

The Hepatitis Prevention Program bids a fond farewell to Nosipho Beaufort, our Field Services Coordinator.

Nosipho has moved to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. She'll be working in the Immunization Systems Support Branch with Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH), which is an agency contracted to the CDC.

Nosipho worked in the Bureau of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis for six years.



Hepatitis Health is brought to you by the Hepatitis Prevention Program, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, Division of Disease Control, at the Florida Department of Health. Submit your articles and photos to: April_Crowley@doh.state.fl.us

The Last Picture Show, left to right, back row: Phil Reichert, Carl McKissick and April Crowley. Front row: Jessi Embleton, Nosipho Beaufort and Cyndena Hall.