

POSITION PAPER #01-0209 (February 2009)

Title: *Hepatitis Education for Health Care Professionals*

Prepared by: The Florida Viral Hepatitis Council (VHC). The VHC is a partnership between the state of Florida, Department of Health (DOH) and non-governmental community members that provides guidance to the DOH Hepatitis Prevention Program and is responsible for writing a comprehensive hepatitis prevention plan. The group is made up of twenty members from medical, public health, academic, research, clinical and other related areas. The group meets twice a year and includes consumers (individuals who have been diagnosed and treated for viral hepatitis) in its membership.

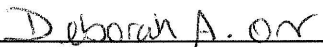
Goal: Increase the knowledge about viral hepatitis in health care professionals in the state of Florida.

Statement of the Problem: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that nearly 300,000 Floridians are infected with hepatitis C. Approximately 120,000 Floridians are infected with hepatitis B. Most people with chronic viral hepatitis are unaware of their status. Testing and treatment for viral hepatitis is more cost effective than treating end stage liver disease, both in terms of human cost and money. Treatment for an individual with hepatitis C can require forty-eight weeks or more of therapy which can cost upwards of \$30,000. The cost of a liver transplant averages about \$300,000 to \$400,000, plus more for follow-up care. Quality of life lost during treatment and recovery is significant.

The routine offering of testing for viral hepatitis in a variety of health care settings (eg: STD and HIV clinics in county health departments, jails and prisons and substance abuse treatment facilities) would accomplish these objectives: 1) the provision of early intervention services for people infected with hepatitis and, 2) the provision of prevention and vaccination services.


Health care providers are in a unique position to have a positive impact on this health problem. Many health care providers are not provided with regular updates about viral hepatitis.

Recommendation: The Viral Hepatitis Council recommends that at least one contact hour of viral hepatitis content be included in continuing education requirements for relicensure in doctors, nurses and other health care providers who are licensed by the Florida Department of Health. The group further recommends that the Hepatitis Prevention Program collaborate with related entities to provide at least one educational conference per year targeting health care workers.



Deborah A. Orr, Ph.D.

Community Co-Chair
Florida Viral Hepatitis Council



Philip E. Reichert, M.P.H.

Department Co-Chair
Florida Viral Hepatitis Council

