

Press Release
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NVHR: Administration's 2012 Budget Proposal Represents 'Sea Change' in National Response to Viral Hepatitis Epidemic

Budget Proposal Calls for \$5 Million Increase for State-based Surveillance, Screening & Treatment Programs

Washington, DC—The Administration's 2012 budget proposal to increase federal funding for expanded state and locally based viral hepatitis surveillance, screening, and treatment by more than \$5 million heralds a sea change in our nation's national strategy to respond to the viral hepatitis epidemic, the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR) said today.

"On behalf of more than 6 million Americans afflicted with viral hepatitis B and C, NVHR would like to say, 'Thank you, Mr. President,'" said NVHR Director Martha Saly. "With this budget proposal of \$25 million, the Administration has recognized that early intervention and prevention are the cornerstones of an effective national viral hepatitis strategy. In the coming months, NVHR looks forward to working closely with the Administration and Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to make this proposal reality."

More than 6 million Americans are estimated to be afflicted with viral hepatitis and three-quarters of them don't know it. Most infected individuals only become aware of their disease after it has progressed to liver failure, cirrhosis, or liver cancer. With the vast majority of liver cancers caused by unchecked viral hepatitis, the Administration's increased funding proposal for early intervention and treatment promises to help reduce the incidence of liver cancer as well.

The Administration's budget proposal on viral hepatitis specifically states:

"CDC's FY 2012 request of \$25,000,000 for VH reflects an increase of \$5,222,000 above the FY 2010 level. With this increase, CDC will expand and strengthen surveillance capacity in 10 high burden state and local health departments to detect VH transmission, monitor health disparities and implementation and impact of recommended prevention services; develop and execute VH awareness and training programs for public health and clinical care professionals to implement and scale-up VH screening and care referral; and enhance work with global partners to implement VH surveillance and prevention programs in high burden countries."

The Administration's budget proposal is the first of many new expected developments on viral hepatitis in 2011. Next month, the US Department of Health & Human Services is expected to unveil a national strategy for the prevention of viral hepatitis and liver cancer. On Capitol Hill, bipartisan legislation that garnered support from over 70 House Members in the 111th Congress is expected to be introduced again. And this summer, two new drug therapies are expected to receive final approval from the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) that will greatly enhance hepatitis C treatment.

Contact: Phil Blando, pblando@abmpartnersllc.com, 202-534-1772

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