



METHADONE MONTHLY

Fifth Edition

April 2006



**We will be CLOSED on APRIL 14th for GOOD FRIDAY
we hope you have a good Easter holiday with friends and family**

NEWS FLASH*** NEWS FLASH**

**Lupe left for a short time but just could
with the Methadone Treatment Program
everyone know she is glad to be back**



LUPE is back!

**not stay away from us. She missed working
and has returned. Lupe would like to let
and enjoys working with all of you!**

If anyone has questions or would like to have more information about a particular subject please let Sue know and she will try to have it for the next Newsletter.

What is Hepatitis C (HCV)

Hepatitis C (HCV for short) is a virus that lives in human blood. A virus is one of the smallest living things known to exist inside plants and animals. HCV makes new hepatitis C viruses by infecting the liver, and after many years the liver can become so damaged by hepatitis C that it cannot perform many of the important jobs that it must do to keep us healthy. You can only get hepatitis C by getting HCV infected blood from someone who has hepatitis C, and **ONLY** if that infected blood gets into your body. If you have hepatitis C you should make sure that your blood does not come into contact with someone else's blood. Many people have hepatitis C so you are not alone. It takes many years for hepatitis C to cause damage to the liver and to make someone sick. There are many things that people can do to help fight hepatitis C, and the best time to start is early – before hepatitis C has a chance to damage your liver. One of the most important things you can do is to stop drinking alcohol. Talk with your doctor about ways to stay healthy and about the medications that can rid the body of hepatitis C, and if they can help.

How can you get Hepatitis C?

HCV is spread primarily by direct contact with human blood. You may have gotten infected with HCV if:

- you ever injected street drugs, as the needles and/or other drug "works" used to prepare or inject the drug(s) may have had someone else's blood that contained HCV on them.
- you received blood, blood products, or solid organs from a donor whose blood contained HCV.
- you were ever on long-term kidney dialysis as you may have unknowingly shared supplies/equipment that had someone else's blood on them.

- you were ever a healthcare worker and had frequent contact with blood on the job, especially accidental needlesticks.
- your mother had hepatitis C at the time she gave birth to you. During the birth her blood may have gotten into your body.
- you ever had sex with a person infected with HCV.
- you lived with someone who was infected with HCV and shared items such as razors or toothbrushes that might have had his/her blood on them.

HCV and Methadone

Many people who take methadone also have hepatitis C (HCV for short). In fact it may be that as many as 9 out of 10 people who take methadone also have HCV. The good news is that methadone is safe for the liver unless the liver is so damaged that it can not handle methadone very well. If this happens, the liver is checked by a doctor or nurse to make sure that the methadone dose or amount is safe. If you have HCV and take methadone there are many things you can do to stay healthy. One of the best things you can do is to stop drinking alcohol. People who have HCV and take methadone can be treated with HCV medicines even while taking methadone. Talk to your doctor or nurse to find out if you need to be treated for HCV.

HCV and Methadone Treatment

There are many people who take methadone that also have hepatitis C (HCV for short). Many of the people who have HCV and are taking methadone live normal and healthy lives. If you have hepatitis C and take methadone and your liver is damaged you may need to be treated with HCV medicines. Talk to your doctor to find out if you need to be treated. There are two drugs used to treat HCV that are taken together. One of them, interferon, is a drug that needs to be injected under the skin. There is a new type of interferon called pegylated interferon that is a form of timed release interferon that only needs to be injected once a week. The other medicine taken with interferon is called ribavirin. Ribavirin comes in either pill or capsule form and is taken two times a day. The medicines used to treat HCV can have some side effects. Some people who take HCV medications say that some of the side effects remind them of the way they felt when they tried to stop taking street drugs. The good news is that most of these side effects can be taken care of by working closely with a doctor or nurse. The other good news is that up to about half of the people taking HCV medications can clear HCV.

It is important to remember:

- If you take methadone and have HCV you should talk to a doctor or nurse about ways to stay healthy
- Most people with HCV can live normal and healthy lives
- People with HCV and on methadone can be treated for their HCV
- Talk to your doctor to see if you need to be treated for HCV
- Side effects from HCV medicines can feel like withdrawing from drugs, but most of these symptoms can be treated by a doctor or nurse

Coming in the Next Issue: Managing Those HCV Important Unimportant Side Effects



All information was found at the Hepatitis C Support Project website