

a series of fact sheets written  
by experts in the field of liver  
disease

## *Patient Assistance Programs*

Alan Franciscus, Editor-in-Chief

### **MANY AMERICANS DO NOT HAVE INSURANCE AND/OR PRESCRIPTION COVERAGE**

for healthcare services. In addition, some Americans have insurance coverage that has high deductibles. For these reasons people are in need of free or low-cost medicines. In order to provide free or low-cost medicines to those who qualify, patient assistance programs have been created by the pharmaceutical industry. In addition to these services some pharmaceutical companies will work with patients to see if the prescription for their drug is covered by the patient's insurance company or other drug plans.

The patient assistance programs also offer other services for people undergoing treatment with their respective medications. Merck/Schering and Genentech/Roche provide services such as a 24 hour nurse on call, motivational information to help patients adhere and stay on the medications as well as various tips on side-effect management. These services can be accessed on the web or by calling the pharmaceutical company (see information below).

### *Partnership for Prescription Assistance*

Partnership for Prescription Assistance was launched in 2005 as a centralized site for help with patient assistance prescription coverage. Pharmaceutical, local and national organizations participate to bring more than 475 public and private patient assistance programs together in one place.

The Partnership for Prescription Assistance was formed because many Americans do not know that they may qualify for free or low-cost medication. A centralized location makes it easier for patients to find assistance programs for a variety of prescriptions drugs. The goal or mission of the Partnership for Prescription Assistance is to bring about more awareness of the patient assistance programs and to help put people in touch with these programs.

To find out if you qualify for an assistance program go to the Partnership for Prescription Assistance Web Site <https://www.pparx.org> or call 1-888-477-2669 (toll free) for more information.

### ***To speed up the process, have the following information available:***

- Age
- State of residence and zip code
- Estimated gross annual household income
- Number of people living in the household
- Brand name of the prescription medicines that you are currently taking or have been prescribed (Pegasys/Copegus – Genentech; PegIntron/Rebetol – Schering; Ribasphere and Infergen – Three Rivers Pharmaceuticals).
- Type of health insurance and/or prescription coverage (if any)
- Name and contact information of physician who prescribed or will prescribe the medication.

The people who assist you are specially trained to be courteous and sensitive to the special issues of information related to money and issues surrounding illness. All of the information is strictly confidential.

If it is determined that you may be eligible for a particular program you will be asked to fill out an application. For most people this process is stressful for a variety of reasons so it is highly recommended that you involve a caregiver, social worker, benefits counselor, healthcare professional, or friend to help with the initial process and fill out the application. After you fill out the patient information, the application will have to be sent to your medical provider to complete.

## Other services

In addition to the drug assistance programs, pharmaceutical companies offer a wide variety of services:

- Some of the pharmaceutical companies will offer help with any insurance problems you may be having getting your medications covered.
- Provision of educational materials and information about hepatitis C including general facts about their HCV medicines.
- On-line services that can help with getting through treatment, such as on-line treatment diaries, reminders about taking your medicines and getting lab work done.
- Toll-free numbers to call for information and advice staffed by medical providers.

## Local Health Department Programs:

In order to qualify for free or low cost medicines you need to have a current medical provider who is overseeing your care. If you do not have a medical provider check with your local health department about possible access programs through local, county and state health programs.

## Patient Assistance Programs: Hepatitis A & B Vaccines

People with hepatitis C should be vaccinated against hepatitis A and hepatitis B if they have not been previously infected. The makers of the HAV and HBV vaccines offer patients assistance programs with low-cost and free vaccines (see below):

## Clinical Trials

Clinical trials are another way to access care and treatment. To find out more information about clinical trials in your area visit <http://www.hcvadvocate.org/community/trials.asp> The HCV Advocate Drug Pipeline at <http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/hepC/HCVDrugs.html> maintains a current list of all drugs in development to treat hepatitis C. The list includes the name and Web information of the pharmaceutical company that you can contact about clinical trials in your area.

## Resources:

- **Merck** - VAQTA – hepatitis A vaccine; RECOMBIVAX HB – hepatitis B vaccine  
<http://www.merck.com/merckhelps/patientassistance/home.html>; 1-800-293-3881
- **GSK** - HAVRIX – hepatitis A vaccine; ENGERIX-B – hepatitis B vaccine; TWINRIX – combination hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccine  
[http://www.gskforyou.com/10\\_programs\\_under.htm](http://www.gskforyou.com/10_programs_under.htm); 1-866-475-3678

The pharmaceutical companies that make HCV medications can also be contacted directly:

### Genentech/Roche

- **Pegasys – Pegassist**  
[www.pegassist.com](http://www.pegassist.com)  
Phone: 1-877-PEGASYS (1-877-734-2797)
- **Access Solutions**  
[www.genentechaccesssolutions.com/portal/site/AS/](http://www.genentechaccesssolutions.com/portal/site/AS/)

### Merck/Schering – Be in Charge

- [www.beincharge.com](http://www.beincharge.com)  
Phone: 1-800-521-7157

### Three Rivers Pharmaceuticals

- **Ribacare:**  
[www.3riverspharma.com/pat\\_riba.htm](http://www.3riverspharma.com/pat_riba.htm)  
1-866-650-RIBA
- **Aspire (Infergen):**  
[www.infergen.com/7-Resources/1-Aspire.html](http://www.infergen.com/7-Resources/1-Aspire.html)

**For more information about hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HCV coinfections, please visit [www.hcvadvocate.org](http://www.hcvadvocate.org).**

## • hcspFACTsheet •

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The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

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