

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

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Being an Effective Healthcare Consumer: Choosing a Healthcare Provider

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FINDING A NEW DOCTOR OR OTHER MEDICAL

professional can take a little effort. Doing some homework up front can make your first appointment go more smoothly. Start by asking for a referral. If you are currently satisfied with one or more of your health care practitioners ask that source for a referral. You can also ask family, friends, and co-workers for suggestions.

Next you can check the provider's background. After you have some names, you can use the Internet to confirm that the provider has a current license. The American Medical Association (AMA), your state's medical board and the county medical association have information about physicians.

- www.ama-assn.org/aps/amahg.htm - Can verify a physician's credentials. Also has tips on how to choose a doctor.
- www.docboard.org - Keeps records of malpractice judgments for some states and has links to other states.
- www.searchpointe.com - Searches for malpractice judgments against physicians.
- www.docinfo.org - Searches for malpractice judgments for a \$10 fee per physician.

Some questions can be answered over the phone by the office staff, thus saving precious face-to-face time:

- Ask if the provider is accepting new patients.
- Find out how soon you can be seen. What is the typical wait time for an appointment?

- Is your insurance accepted? If so, be certain you understand any co-pays, deductibles, or other out-of-pocket costs for which you may be responsible.
- Does the office bill your insurance or will you need to pay the fee directly and manage the insurance reimbursement yourself?
- What are the fees? Does the provider charge for time spent talking to you on the phone?
- If you are seeing a nurse practitioner or physician assistant, then who is the physician overseeing his/her practice?
- Will you be seeing the provider you have been assigned or will you see other people in that medical group?
- Which hospital is the physician affiliated with?
- Does the medical group have an advice nurse who is available for phone calls?

After you have met with the medical provider, take a moment to reflect on the appointment. Consider the following:

- Did the provider seem knowledgeable and experienced?
- Does this provider communicate well?
- Do you feel the provider gave you his or her full attention?
- Is this a person you would want on your medical team?

For more information about hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HCV coinfections, please visit www.hcvadvocate.org.

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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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