

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

Being an Effective Healthcare Consumer: Choosing a Healthcare Provider

Lucinda K. Porter, RN

FINDING A NEW DOCTOR OR OTHER MEDICAL

professional can take a little effort. Doing some homework up front may 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, check the provider's background. After you have some names, 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. To search the Internet, type in the name of your state, along with "medical board" into your search box.

- 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.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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Executive Director

Editor-in-Chief, HCSP Publications
Alan Franciscus

Design

Paula Fener

Production

C.D. Mazoff, PhD

Contact information:

Hepatitis C Support Project
PO Box 427037
San Francisco, CA 94142-7037

alanfranciscus@hcvadvocate.org

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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