



HEPATITIS FOUNDATION  
INTERNATIONAL

October 15, 2009

President Barack Obama  
White House  
Washington, DC

Dear President Obama:

The Hepatitis Foundation International (HFI) applauds you for promoting prevention and wellness as an effective approach way to keep all Americans healthier and reduce the cost of treating preventable diseases. HFI urges you to ensure that public health initiatives include both primary and secondary prevention programs. It is critically important that support for educational efforts to reduce high-risk behaviors such as; bloodborne viruses, HBV, HCV, and HIV, the avoidance of hepatotoxic substances, obesity, and excessive alcohol consumption be included in health reform initiatives. Primary prevention including liver health and wellness promoting changes in behavior through education is an essential means of transmission control and adoption of healthy lifestyles. Secondary prevention is an essential strategy for recovery from illnesses and addictions.

- The Hepatitis Foundation International urges the development of a National Prevention Strategy to include the promotion of liver health and wellness as important components of primary and secondary prevention initiatives across all federal agencies and to foster departmental cooperation with governmental and non-governmental agencies regarding preventive education beginning with early childhood education and including community and public health programs.

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- Liver health education and primary prevention are essential components conducive to good health supporting the adoption of healthy lifestyles for all age groups reducing the incidence of preventable diseases.
- Preventive services such as screenings and immunizations should be included to bring the incidence of preventable diseases down reducing the economic burden of illness to our nation.
- Ensure meaningful, timely and reliable access to qualified health care, support service providers and comprehensive care to effectively ensure that all people have this access.
- Provide comprehensive benefits regardless of a person's ability to pay and without a financial limit. Benefits must reflect the comprehensive level of care needed to protect and improve public and personal health, with preventive care and health education as primary objectives. Benefits must include routine hepatitis B and C screening independent of perceived risk factors, education and counseling, and referral to care for those who test positive.
- Expand and strengthen the bases created by public health programs, including Medicaid and Medicare.
- Ensure high and consistent quality of care through evidence-based standards of care and mechanisms to measure and maintain effective high quality care, individual health outcomes, and to support good public health.
- Facilitate a patient's access to a qualified provider, continuity of care regardless of employment status and income, and portability of care benefits.
- Provide fair payment to health care providers in order to ensure a broad spectrum of providers and specialties, including infectious disease, gastroenterology and hepatology. This includes developing payment mechanisms that are transparent, focused on public needs, reflect public health priorities, and discourage costly ADMINISTRATION.

All Americans should have access to high quality and comprehensive health care and preventive education. We need to make a serious course correction and reorient our health system toward prevention. As you develop and debate health reform proposals, we urge you to prioritize prevention and public health.

Sincerely yours,

Thelma King Thiel  
Chair and CEO  
Hepatitis Foundation

International

