

UC San Diego School of Medicine Launches Hepatitis C Clinical Trials

Hepatitis C Community Forum to be held October 20

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A collaborative partnership between the UC San Diego Liver Center and Antiviral Research Center (AVRC) has resulted in 19 clinical trials for hepatitis C virus (HCV), focused on developing more effective and well-tolerated HCV treatments.

Alexander Kuo, MD, an associate professor of medicine at UC San Diego School of Medicine and medical director of the Liver Transplant Program at the UCSD Liver Center, is excited about the collaboration.

"The Liver Center provides patients outstanding patient care through its Hepatitis Clinic and Transplant Program," said Kuo, a lead researcher in the HCV clinical trials. "The AVRC brings with it the knowledge of 25 years of experience in international antiviral clinical research. Together, we can offer members of the community access to HCV treatment options they might not otherwise have, while working to understand the best treatments for the disease."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately five to seven million Americans have HCV infections, with 20,000 new infections occurring each year. Of those living with HCV, an estimated three million have chronic infections and one million are expected to develop cirrhosis of the liver by 2020.

"Many of these patients will develop life threatening complications of decompensated cirrhosis or liver cancer and may require liver transplantation in the next decade," said Kuo. "By developing effective, well-tolerated treatments to cure HCV, we can halt the progression of this disease and save lives. "

David L. Wyles, MD, an assistant professor of medicine in UCSD's Division of Infectious Diseases and a researcher at the AVRC, agrees that clinical trials benefit medical research as much as it does patients.

"With the launch of our HCV clinical trials, we begin researching some of the most advanced HCV treatment regimens available," said Wyles. "Through research come better HCV treatments and the ability to reduce complications such as cirrhosis and liver cancer. Ultimately, wide-scale implementation of effective HCV treatment may lead to decreases in HCV incidence."

The creation of the HCV clinical trials positions UC San Diego School of Medicine to assume national leadership on HCV clinical research, while meeting the public health needs of the community.

In San Diego County, it is estimated that more than 4,000 people are infected with HCV. Those living with HCV are prime candidates to participate in clinical trials, particularly if they have never been treated or failed their previous treatments.

Those wishing to learn more about participating in HCV clinical trials can contact the HCV screening coordinator at (619) 543-8080 or attend the upcoming HCV Community Forum, hosted by the AVRC on October

20, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the San Diego LGBT Community Center at 3909 Centre Street in Hillcrest. The forum will offer presentations by UC San Diego faculty on HCV medications and treatments, including two new medications that received FDA approval this summer. There will also be information available regarding HCV clinical trials and educational opportunities. Individuals living with HCV and the general public are invited to attend the free forum. A light dinner will be served for those who RSVP in advance.

To RSVP for the Hepatitis C Community Forum or get more information, visit: www.hcvforum.eventbrite.com.

HCV is the most common chronic blood borne infection in the U.S. It is primarily transmitted by direct contact with blood. An HCV infection can be diagnosed through a number of blood tests and is curable with appropriate treatment. If left untreated, HCV can lead to liver disease and cirrhosis of the liver.

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