Hepatitis and Liver Disease in the United States

- 25,000,000 Americans - one in every 10 - are or have been afflicted with a liver, biliary or gallbladder disease.

- 20,300 Americans die each year from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis; 360,000 people are hospitalized each year due to cirrhosis.

- Alcoholic liver disease and chronic hepatitis C are the leading causes of cirrhosis.

- An estimated 25,000 people are infected with hepatitis C each year.

- There are over 4 million people who are or have been infected with hepatitis C; 2.7 of whom are chronically infected. Approximately 70% of people infected do not know that they have the virus.

- 10,000 - 12,000 people die of hepatitis C each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that the number of annual deaths from hepatitis C will triple in the next 10 - 20 years.

- Hepatitis B is responsible for 5,000 - 6,000 deaths annually.

- One out of every 250 people is a carrier of hepatitis B and can pass it on to others, often unknowingly.

- 78,000 people are infected with the hepatitis B virus each year; 1.25 million people are chronically infected.

- Up to 90% of pregnant women who are carriers of the hepatitis B virus (HBV) could transmit the virus to their children. Due to the screening of pregnant women for HBV and vaccinations of newborns, there has been a decline in the number of infected newborns.

- Approximately 5,600 liver transplants were performed in 2003. Because of the shortage of organs, it is estimated that over 1,800 people died that year while waiting for a liver transplant. There are currently over 17,700 people waiting for a liver for transplantation.

- There were over 90,000 new infections of hepatitis A in 2001.

- The estimated medical and work loss cost per year of hepatitis B is over $700 million; the estimated medical and work loss costs per year of hepatitis C is over $600 million.

- You are at risk of hepatitis C infection if you:

  - have ever injected illegal drugs, even if you only experimented once many years ago
• You are at risk of hepatitis B infection if you:
  o have sex with someone who is infected with HBV
  o have unprotected sex with multiple partners
  o live in the same house with someone who is infected with HBV
  o have a job that involves contact with human blood (e.g. nurse, emergency medical technician)
  o inject illegal drugs
  o have hemophilia
  o travel to areas where hepatitis B is common

• Asian Americans have the highest rate of hepatitis B in the country; the prevalence rate among Chinese Americans is 5 times higher than that of Caucasian Americans.

• African Americans have the highest rate of infection with hepatitis C in the country; African Americans are twice as likely to be infected with the virus as non-Hispanic Caucasian Americans.

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