Millions of Americans Are Living With Hidden Epidemics of Hepatitis B and C, Top Experts Warn

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 27 /PRNewswire/ -- The American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) and the Trust for America's Health (TFAH) issued a new report today calling for action to be taken to transform how the country deals with viral hepatitis – to help identify millions of Americans who know they are living with chronic forms of hepatitis B and C and to assure access to treatment for all who need it, to prevent even more Americans from becoming infected.

"This report is a critical next step that builds on a recent groundbreaking Institute of Medicine report on viral hepatitis and translates it into a series of action items which will be critically important to control the silent epidemic of viral hepatitis in the US," said Arun J Sanyal MD, President of AASLD.

The report, *HBV & HCV: America's Hidden Epidemics*, examines how new measures included in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) combined with new scientific advancements could be used to spare millions of Americans from developing cirrhosis, liver cancer, or other life threatening complications as they age – which could also lead to billions of dollars in health care savings.

"HBV and HCV are ticking time bombs. If we don't act now to diagnose the millions of Baby Boomers and others, we'll be too late to spare them from developing serious liver diseases. We'll all end up paying the price, since Medicare and Medicaid will end up picking up the tab for much of the care," said Jeff Levi, PhD., Executive Director of TFAH. "Health reform and new science give us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rethink how we deal with these silent killers."

Some key findings in the report include that:

- An estimated 65 to 75 percent of the five million Americans currently infected with the hepatitis B virus (HBV) or hepatitis C virus (HCV) do not even know they have the virus; &#
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