

PRESS RELEASE
October 25, 2004



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**FUNDING APPROVED FOR FIRST OF ITS KIND PROGRAM ASSISTING
UNINSURED AND UNDERINSURED SUFFERING FROM HEPATITIS C**

Health Care Groups Applaud Congress and President for Funding Key Program

WASHINGTON, DC, October 25, 2004 – A unique assistance program for people suffering from Hepatitis C (HCV) will be launched in the nation’s capital, thanks to funding that was approved by Congress and signed by President George W. Bush this week. The program, which received a \$650,000 grant, will be implemented through Unity Health Care, Washington, DC’s largest nonprofit health care organization serving nearly 56,000 residents, many of which are uninsured, underinsured and/ or homeless.

“While some patients qualify for programs such as Medicaid, there is a large population who do not have access to or are ineligible for public assistance programs,” stated Vincent A. Keane, Chief Executive Officer at Unity Health Care. “This makes it difficult for them to access treatment or receive necessary counseling during treatment. HCV patients, in particular, must follow a very difficult treatment regimen and need extra support and counseling from medical professionals.”

“That’s why this program is so important. It helps us reach those individuals not enrolled in any program or not fully covered by them in many cases, who are not seeking treatment for their disease,” added Keane. “We are very grateful to the Congress and the President for providing the funding which will enable us to establish a patient education and adherence program to assist patients through the treatment process. We also wish to express our gratitude to District of Columbia Congresswomen Eleanor Holmes Norton for her leadership in this initiative, and her deep commitment to the medically vulnerable in her City”.

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The District of Columbia has one the highest rates of residents with HCV in the nation-- a disease that disproportionately impacts the African American and Latino communities. Unity Health Care providers are seeing increased numbers of patients with HCV and this agrees with the statement that HCV has reached epidemic proportions.

According to Keane, optimal care often requires an integrated team of providers, including nurse practitioners, to assist the primary physician because HCV is both a complicated disease to treat on its own and often involves treating other diseases like HIV at the same time. The federal funding for this project will help establish a patient education and provider assistance system for HCV patients at Unity Health Care. Once this program is in place, it will be used as a model for other communities across the nation.

In addition, Unity Health Care has partnered with the DC Department of Corrections to provide medical examinations for individuals re-entering the community. Studies indicate that HCV is much more prevalent among incarcerated populations than the general public. And with as many as 6,000 recently released DC residents re-entering the community each year from the correctional system, this project will help Unity Health Care diagnose and further treat those additional patients.

“This is a very important program nationally, as well as in the Washington community, since it will serve as a prototype for integrated health care programs focusing on patients with HCV at other community health centers across the nation,” stated Tom Van Coverden, President and CEO of The National Association of Community Health Centers. “The federal funding has come at a very critical time, as we continue to treat the increasing incidences of this disease throughout the country each year.”

About Unity Health Care, Inc.

Unity Health Care is a non-profit agency offering a continuum of primary medical care and human services to the homeless and uninsured. Founded by a few visionaries who set out to make a difference in the lives of those who could not afford medical care, Unity has emerged as

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the leading provider of services to medically underserved in the District of Columbia and is the fourth largest provider in the nation. Unity was designated as a Federal Qualified Health Center by the federal government in 1987. Last year, Unity Health Care, Inc. provided services for 55,542 residents, or a quarter of the District's residents. Unity Health Care, Inc. provides services in all eight wards through a network of fourteen health centers, twelve sites serving homeless people, and two mobile units.
