

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 18, 2019

VA on path to cure 100,000 Veterans of hepatitis C

Today, VA announced that it is on track to eliminate the [hepatitis C virus \(HCV\)](#), in all Veterans willing and able to be treated.

As of March 3, nearly 116,000 Veterans started all-oral hepatitis C medications in VA, of which 96,654 Veterans completed treatment and have been cured. VA expects to reach 100,000 Veterans cured in as few as two months.

“As the largest single provider of HCV care in the U.S., this is terrific news because it means we are within striking range of eliminating hepatitis C among Veterans under the care of the Veterans Health Administration,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Diagnosing, treating and curing hepatitis C virus infection among Veterans has been a significant priority for VA.”

HCV infection can lead to advanced liver disease (ALD), liver cancer and death. Treatment of HCV can prevent development or progression of ALD, greatly improving survival. However, before 2014, HCV treatment required weekly interferon injections for up to a year, with low cure rates (35-55 percent) among Veterans and significant physical and psychiatric side effects leading to frequent early discontinuation.

Up to that time, of the approximately 180,000 Veterans in VA care who had been diagnosed with chronic HCV infection, only 12,000 had been treated and cured, while over 30,000 had developed ALD.

In early 2014, highly effective, less toxic, all-oral, direct-acting antivirals became available, revolutionizing the treatment of HCV. With the support of Congress and other stakeholders, VA implemented an aggressive program to find all undiagnosed Veterans in VA care with HCV — including those who did not know they carried the infection — link them to HCV care, and offer them treatment with these new medications.

At the peak of this effort to rapidly deploy all-oral direct-acting antivirals, VA began treating close to 2,000 Veterans with HCV every week; nearly one treatment started every minute of every work day.

As a result of this historic effort, the overall death rate one year after treatment reduced to 80 percent among Veterans in VA care with HCV. Veterans cured of HCV with these medications were also 84 percent less likely to develop liver cancer.

The announcement cements VA’s position as a national leader in diagnosis and treatment of HCV and marks a major milestone in the nation’s fight against viral hepatitis. VA is on track to treat more than 125,000 Veterans with these lifesaving medications by October. Currently, fewer than 27,000 Veterans in VA care remain to be treated.

All marketed hepatitis C medications are on the [VA National Formulary](#). Hepatitis C medications used today have few side effects and can be administered as a once a day treatment for as little as eight weeks.

For more information, visit <https://www.hepatitis.va.gov/>.

###