

Hepatitis Awareness Testing Day

June 25, 2009

In Louisiana, one in four people is infected with hepatitis (A, B or C) over their lifetime. Before Hurricane Katrina in 2005, free testing was offered at Charity Hospital in New Orleans. Since the hurricane, resources for the uninsured and underinsured are minimal and free testing is no longer available. Private tests range from \$50 to \$100, a major barrier to hepatitis testing. A lack of awareness of the high prevalence of hepatitis is also a barrier to testing in the state.

To increase awareness of the high prevalence of hepatitis in Louisiana and increase the number of people who are aware of their hepatitis status, a media campaign and testing event in coordination with May's Hepatitis Awareness Month has been proposed.

The "1 in 4" Hepatitis Awareness project will provide a free testing event in three locations (New Orleans – The NO AIDS Task Force, Baton Rouge – Metro Health and Shreveport – The Philadelphia Center) across the state.

The testing day event, modeled after the HIV National Testing Day, will be held on June 25, 2009 in the three cities. Those who test negative on the rescheduled day will be counseled on ways to maintain their negative status. Those who test positive will be referred for follow-up care in line with current referral methods. On testing day, anyone who identifies as a high risk, will be offered hepatitis A and B vaccinations free of charge.

The media campaign will include, but not be limited to, print materials, newspaper calendar listings, radio PSAs and television appearances. Messages will inform the public of the prevalence of hepatitis in Louisiana, risk factors for contracting hepatitis and information regarding the free testing event on the new date chosen.