National Hispanic Hepatitis Awareness Day is May 15

May 14, 2012

Tuesday, May 15, marks the debut of the annual National Hispanic Hepatitis Awareness Day. Coordinated by the Latino Commission on AIDS, this important series of events, primarily focusing on the need for increased screening and testing in Latino communities, will take place annually on May 15 and will coincide with viral hepatitis testing and educational programming during National Hepatitis Awareness month.

“May 15 is the one day we set aside to push forward with our commitment to bring awareness of hepatitis and engage our communities in a strong and fruitful response to a preventable viral hepatitis epidemic,” reads HispanicHepatitisDay.org, the website developed by the Latino Commission on AIDS. “The theme for the first-ever National Hispanic Hepatitis Awareness Day in 2012 is Hablemos Sobre la Hepatitis (Let’s Talk About Hepatitis).”

According to the website, U.S. Latinos ages 40 and older are 30 percent more likely to contract hepatitis B virus (HBV), compared with non-Latino whites. In addition, though Latinos are diagnosed less frequently with hepatitis C virus (HCV) than non-Latino whites—0.15 cases per 100,000 for Latinos versus 0.22 per 100,000 for non-Latino whites—viral hepatitis is twice as often a cause of death for Latinos than it is for whites.

Because of social and economic issues, including the lack of access to care, Latinos also have more rapid buildup of liver scarring than non-Latino whites. For example, Puerto Ricans living with HCV advance toward cirrhosis at a younger age than other populations.

The website holds a wealth of resources ranging from information on Latinos and viral hepatitis to tools on how to engage Latino communities in a range of activities, including hepatitis C testing.

To learn more about hepatitis testing, you can search for screening facilities via HispanicHepatitisDay.org or through HepMag.com.

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