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**National Foundation for Infectious Diseases Supports World Hepatitis Day**

**Bethesda, MD (July 26, 2018)** – In support of World Hepatitis Day (July 28), the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is working to raise awareness about viral hepatitis, to ensure that screening, vaccination and treatment for hepatitis B occurs on a timely basis for those individuals at risk.

NFID is developing a new initiative that focuses on reducing the burden of hepatitis B infection in the United States by increasing hepatitis B vaccination rates in at-risk adults. Nearly 30 years after the U.S. adopted a public health strategy aimed at eliminating transmission of hepatitis B virus, childhood immunization rates are high, but adult immunization rates are stagnant at around 25 percent.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates there were 21,000 new hepatitis B infections in 2016. After years of decreasing infection rates, the U.S. is experiencing an uptick in cases related to more injection drug use stemming from the opioid epidemic. Sharing needles and sexual contact with infected individuals are the primary way hepatitis B is transmitted. Up to 2.2 million individuals in the U.S. are living with chronic hepatitis B, which greatly increases their risk of liver cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver-related death.

“There are many barriers preventing high-risk adults, especially those age 29-59 years, from getting vaccinated against hepatitis B per [CDC recommendations](#), including lack of awareness,” noted William Schaffner, M.D., NFID Medical Director. “NFID is urging all healthcare professionals to identify patients at high risk, to be familiar with the current vaccine recommendations and to incorporate them into their practices.”

Although certain groups are at higher risk, anyone who wants to be protected from hepatitis B should be vaccinated. Vaccination is recommended for adults who are at risk for hepatitis B virus infection, including those with chronic liver disease, kidney disease, HIV infection or diabetes; sexually active persons who are not in a long-term monogamous relationship; men who have sexual contact with other men; people who share needles; and health and public safety workers at risk for exposure to blood or body fluids.

The NFID initiative aims to educate healthcare professionals and consumers about hepatitis B and its prevention. As part of the initiative, NFID held a multidisciplinary roundtable in June 2018 to engage hepatitis B subject matter experts, policy makers, healthcare professionals who care for at-risk adults, as well as advocacy groups and professional societies dedicated to improving health outcomes in adults at risk of HBV. A Call to Action containing approaches to help address and/or overcome barriers that impede immunization will be published later this summer.

A complimentary CME webinar on August 28, 2018 (<http://bit.ly/hepatitisB-webinar>) will summarize the roundtable outcomes and preview new tools and resources to help improve hepatitis B vaccine uptake in at-risk adults. NFID experts are available for interviews and background information on hepatitis B.

**About the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases**

Founded in 1973, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases (NFID) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to educating the public and healthcare professionals about the causes, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases across the lifespan. Visit NFID at [www.nfid.org](http://www.nfid.org).

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