People who have experienced trauma or difficult experiences in their childhoods are 240% more likely to contract Hepatitis C infection when they are adults. Hepatitis C is passed between people when there is exposure to contaminated blood and mostly happens through blood transfusions or by sharing contaminated needles.

The prescription opioid abuse epidemic is also fueling an increase in new Hepatitis C infections. The Centers for Disease Control reports:

• Acute Hepatitis C cases in the US went up 150% between 2010 and 2013.
• Most of the new Hepatitis C cases are among young people who inject drugs in rural and suburban areas.
• Most of these young people began using oral prescription painkillers before transitioning to injecting drugs.
• Injection drug use is the most common risk factor for Hepatitis C transmission in the United States.

Drug use is one way that people may cope with the impact of abuse, neglect, poverty, violence, etc. The connection between having a history of trauma and being at risk for Viral Hepatitis suggests that being able to recognize and respond to trauma may be an important part of helping people cope with Viral Hepatitis.

Faith leaders can help people get the help that they need by talking frankly about Hepatitis C, encouraging people to get tested, and providing kindness and support to those who are infected.

“Hepatitis C is a very manageable condition that doesn’t have to have a severe impact on health if it is diagnosed and treated,” says Dr. Abdul Ghani, cardiologist at the Advocate Heart Institute at Advocate South Suburban Hospital in Hazel Crest, IL.

Prayer: God of our bodies, minds and spirits. May our care for each other be a source of healing, hope and new life.