

Jon Secada Tunes In to Hep C

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Singer/songwriter Jon Secada has joined “Tune In to Hep C,” a public health awareness campaign to educate people about chronic hepatitis C, especially in the Latino community, according to a Merck statement. In addition to the three-time Grammy-winning Cuban American, other participants in the campaign include musicians Gregg Allman and Natalie Cole; the campaign is sponsored by Merck and the American Liver Foundation (ALF).

“My father chose not to tell anyone about his disease for a long time, and he chose not to take action against it for reasons I may never understand,” Secada said. “Before he passed away, he told me that he wanted me to share his story to help other people like him who have chronic hepatitis C but aren’t taking action. You can’t be silent with a silent disease that has consequences like chronic hepatitis C—you need to talk to your doctor and talk to your family. Take it from me: The people who love you want to be there to help you, and want you to be there for them.”

Chronic hepatitis C, a viral infection that can cause serious long-term liver damage, liver cancer and other liver disease, is a significant presence in the Latino community. Of the 3.2 million people living with hepatitis C in the United States, 1 million are Latinos. Furthermore, research shows that in Latinos, the disease progresses more quickly and results in more health problems than among other ethnic groups. Given that many people with hepatitis C don’t know their status—70 percent to 80 percent of those infected don’t have any obvious symptoms—outreach and education efforts are very important.

“Chronic hepatitis C disproportionately affects the Hispanic community. Unfortunately, there is stigma and low awareness of the disease and its potential complications, so it is not widely discussed among Hispanics in the U.S.,” said ALF president and chief executive officer Newton Guerin. “We hope Jon’s desire to turn his family’s loss into a positive message for those who face this disease will encourage them to take action.”

The campaign’s website, TuneInToHepC.com, contains information about chronic hepatitis C among Latinos, including a video of Secada talking about his personal story. A Spanish-language version of the site can be found at HepatitisCTocaElTema.com.
