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HEPATITIS C KILLS 10,000 A YEAR!

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HEADLINE: RISKY BUSINESS TO LIVE WITH HEPATITIS C, IT HELPS TO KNOW YOU HAVE IT

BYLINE: Dennis Fiely, Dispatch Accent Reporter

Hepatitis } "I was doing all the right things," he said. "I quit drinking 13 years ago and had a good position with a good company. It seemed like my life was snatched away from me."

C In 1996, Kallay founded the Hepatitis C Action Task Force, a nonprofit organization to offer support for patients and raise awareness about a disease many people know little about.

X "There's so much fear and misinformation about it that people would rather be told that they have AIDS," Kallay said. (The task force will present its second annual educational conference Thursday at the Ohio State University Medical Center.)

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y/ Hepatitis C kills about 10,000 Americans each year. The disease progresses slowly to attack the liver and can eventually lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. Liver failure due to hepatitis C is the leading cause of liver transplants in the United States.

Some people may have hepatitis C for their entire lives and never experience

any symptoms. Others, such as Kallay and his girlfriend, registered nurse Sandra Poole, are overcome by fatigue, joint and muscle pain, and digestive problems.

Kallay has pancreatitis and gastritis; Poole, who helps Kallay operate the task force, has ulcers.

Each suffers from a loss of appetite and what they call "the fogs," short-term memory loss. The disease cost them their jobs and their marriages.

While Kallay may blame risky lifestyle choices for his condition, others are victims of needle sticks and transfusions.

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