



Amber Rojas was almost eight months pregnant when she learned she had hepatitis C. After her daughter was born on Dec. 23, 2014, Rojas had hoped to start treatment with a newly approved, highly effective drug called Harvoni.

After filing for prior authorization and waiting for months, the 34-year old mother received an unwelcome letter on August 27, 2015 — her treatment request had been denied because her liver was still too healthy. Rojas said that even though she felt very sick with flu-like symptoms, her insurance provider deemed her “not sick enough to qualify.”

Rojas is one of an estimated 3.2 million Americans with hepatitis C, an infection that attacks the liver. In the United States, hepatitis C kills more people every year than HIV. Drugs like Harvoni promise to cure more than 90 percent of patients, yet many insurance providers authorize treatment only if a patient has extensive liver damage, or a fibrosis score of 3 or 4.

In the first six months of 2015, approximately 130,000 patients started treatment on Harvoni or Sovaldi, two of the most widely prescribed medications, according to the manufacturer.

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