**World Hepatitis Day, July 28th**

***With a pan-Canadian Framework for Action in place, advocates now looking to provinces for implementation.***

Great advances have been made in treatment of hepatitis C in recent years. It is preventable and it is also curable. Hepatitis C can now be cured in almost all cases with daily pills in as little as 8 to 12 weeks with few or no side effects. These new treatments - along with our knowledge about successful prevention practices - make the prospect of eliminating hepatitis C in Canada a real possibility.

However, people are still needlessly suffering while policy catches up with the science.

Nearly all provinces and territories have made recent progress regarding treatment eligibility. As of this year, treatment is now available upon diagnosis through almost all provincial drug plans, but what we have learned from other countries working toward the elimination of hepatitis C is that treatment eligibility alone will not get us there. It is estimated that nearly ½ of those living with hepatitis C in Canada are unaware of their infection. As well, access to treatment remains inequitable, with geographical, cultural, and socio-economic challenges creating barriers.

Advocates have long called on the government for a National Hepatitis C Elimination Action Plan. Earlier this month, the government of Canada released the pan-Canadian Framework for Action for Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Illnesses (STBBIs), to offer guidance for each province and territory in creating an implementation plan. Hepatitis C is included in this Framework, with the World Health Organization’s target of elimination by 2030 listed.

This World Hepatitis Day, advocates are marking the day by calling on their Provincial and Territorial governments to create these implementation plans. Provinces and Territories will need to take the high-level goals of the STBBI Framework, and make them actionable with defined targets and well-resourced strategies for reaching those hard-to-reach populations for prevention, testing, and treatment.

Yet even though the Framework was approved at a recent F/P/T Health Ministers’ meeting, not all provinces are on board. To date, Prince Edward Island is the only province that has committed to expanding their hepatitis treatment program into an elimination plan. In fact, they expect to reach elimination by 2025, well ahead of the WHO target of 2030.

"Prince Edward Island continues to be a provincial leader in Canada, ensuring that its residents are diagnosed and linked to hepatitis C care and treatment," says Action Hepatitis Canada’s co-chair Gerard Yetman. "To see a province committing to elimination, and dedicating resources to developing a coordinated plan, is something we would like to see other provinces follow in the very near future."

**Action Hepatitis Canada**

Action Hepatitis Canada is a national coalition of 60 organizations responding to hepatitis B and C. Our work engages government, policy makers, and civil society across Canada to promote hepatitis B and C prevention, improve access to care and treatment, increase knowledge and innovation, create public health awareness, build health-professional capacity, and support community-based groups and initiatives. Learn more at [www.actionhepatitiscanada.ca](file:///C:\Users\Jennifer\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\V2Q4GM7E\www.actionhepatitiscanada.ca).

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