

September 6, 2016

Honourable Sarah Hoffman
Minister of Health
423 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
health.minister@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister Hoffman,

I am writing to you on behalf of Action Hepatitis Canada, a national coalition of 53 member organizations working toward the elimination of viral hepatitis in Canada.

Earlier this summer, the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) issued revised Common Drug Review (CDR) recommendations for four curative treatments (Harvoni, Hologic Pak, Sovaldi and Daklinza) for people living with Chronic Hepatitis infection (HCV).

Their revised recommendation is that all patients with HCV be considered for treatment regardless of the degree of fibrosis to their liver. This recommendation is supported by clinical evidence which indicates that it can be detrimental to the health of people living with HCV to wait for significant liver damage before offering treatment and a cure. It also acknowledges the desire of Canadians to access the most effective, least toxic treatments on the market to address their health conditions.

We are writing to you today to ask if your government will review provincial eligibility criteria for Hepatitis C medications and align them with clinical evidence and national recommendations advising that all patients living with HCV be considered for treatment.

Hepatitis C is a leading cause of cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver transplantation in Canada. Thanks to significant advances in treatment, it can now be cured in almost all cases in as little as 8 to 12 weeks. Despite there being a cure, the prevalence of advanced liver disease as a result of HCV continues to rise.

We recognize that cost is often referenced by governments as an obstacle to access to these curative drugs. While these new drugs have been found to be cost effective on a patient by patient basis, their prices are high.

Various governments around the world have found creative ways to balance financial investment while prioritizing the health and well-being of their citizens. Here in Canada, Quebec is embracing the prospect of reducing longer-term financial costs that would be incurred by leaving this viral infection unchecked. Quebec has established an ambitious 6-year plan to ensure that all people living with Hepatitis C are offered treatment and a cure.

We would like to meet with you to discuss plans to update access criteria to HCV medications in Alberta. During that meeting, we would be happy to outline creative policies established in Quebec and elsewhere ensuring treatment to all of those in need.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Bacon', written in a cursive style.

Patricia Bacon,
Chair, Action Hepatitis Canada

***Action Hepatitis Canada** is a national coalition of 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.*