

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

APR 19 2016

Dr. Patricia Bacon
Chair
Infection Hepatitis Canada
136 Toronto Street
Scarborough, Ontario L4N 1T9

Dear Dr. Bacon:

Thank you for your letter of March 10, 2016, concerning the Public Health Agency of Canada's hepatitis C screening recommendations, and for sharing Infection Hepatitis Canada's Position Statement titled *Hepatitis C Age Cohort Screening*.

In 2014, the Agency developed a draft *Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Screening Statement*. However, after a careful review of the latest evidence and discussions with provincial and territorial partners, it was determined that a more rigorous methodological approach and additional analysis of the potential benefits and harms of a cohort-based screening approach was needed before a recommendation could be made.

The Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC) has advised the Agency that the delay in providing any documents for peer review will not affect the original target publication date of fall 2016.

The purpose of the manuscript titled, *Hepatitis C in Canada and the Importance of risk-based screening* published in the *Canada Communicable Disease Report*, was intended to maintain our efforts to raise awareness among healthcare professionals to continue to screen individuals at increased risk for the hepatitis C infection.

While the prevalence of chronic hepatitis C in Canada was estimated to be 0.6 percent, a 2010-2012 survey of people who inject drugs showed 18 percent had been exposed to hepatitis C. In this context, risk-based screening for hepatitis C remains important for the detection of infections resulting from identified risk behaviours.

.../2

The Agency's current risk-based screening evidence supports prevention by focusing on eliminating transmission among key populations in which the majority of new infections occur. Any revision of the existing guidance will be based on sound methodological assessment of scientific evidence including an assessment of potential benefits and harms. We look forward to the results from the CTFPHC's review of the evidence. This review will be taken into consideration when making any revisions to the Agency's hepatitis C screening guidelines.

The Agency continues to work with provincial and territorial partners to increase awareness and promote screening among those at an increased risk for hepatitis C.

Thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'G. Taylor', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Gregory W. Taylor, BSc, MD, CCFP, FRCPC