



MEDIA RELEASE – 28 JUNE 2008

HEP C TREATMENT NUMBERS NEED TO DOUBLE

The release this week of the NSW hepatitis C care and treatment report has been warmly welcomed by the community organisation working on behalf of hepatitis C affected communities in NSW.

“We have been greatly concerned for many years about the inability of hepatitis treatment clinics to expand to enable more people to access pharmaceutical treatment” said Grenville Rose, President of the Hepatitis C Council of NSW. “This report makes it clear that we need significant funding increases to support essential treatment expansion.”

The report’s main finding is that the number of people undergoing hepatitis C treatment needs to double. “And that’s just to keep the current level of cirrhosis and liver cancer under control at current levels,” said Mr Rose.

Cure rates range from 50 to 80 percent for people with hepatitis C who undergo treatment. Yet out of more than 75,000 people in NSW living with chronic hepatitis C, only 1,400 are receiving treatment each year.

The review, commissioned by NSW Health, notes the increasing burden placed on health services by people with advanced liver disease needing to access in-patient liver transplant services. “It makes a lot of sense for people with hepatitis C who need treatment to be able to access it in the out-patient setting,” said Mr Rose. “Treatment can cure hepatitis C and therefore stop liver disease progression,” he said.

“This is far preferable, and far less costly in the long run, than for hospitals to admit people and care for them if they have advanced cirrhosis, liver cancer or may require liver transplant,” said Mr Rose.

But with clinics operating at maximum capacity across the state, and with inconsistent and inadequate planning and funding arrangements across New South Wales’ eight area health services, a significant injection of funds is required to support expanded nursing and support services and to increase service coordination.

“This report provides the ideal opportunity for the NSW Health Minister and the health service chief executives to work together to help reduce the burden hepatitis C places on individuals and on the state’s health budget,” said Mr Rose.

Current hepatitis C treatment consists of either a 12 or 6 month regime of self-administered weekly injections along with daily tablets. For more information call the *Hep C Helpline* on 1800 803 990 or visit www.hepatitisc.org.au

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