

HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

April 2019



England

NHS England announces hepatitis C elimination deal

[NHS England](#) has today announced its hepatitis C elimination deal, which aims to support the diagnosis and treatment of tens of thousands more patients.

The agreement between [NHS England](#) and the three pharmaceutical companies who make drugs to treat hepatitis C – [AbbVie](#), [Gilead Sciences](#) and [Merck Sharp & Dohme](#) (MSD) – will guarantee access to hepatitis C treatments to all patients and deliver better value for the NHS. It will also include a role for the pharmaceutical industry in funding initiatives to find undiagnosed patients and enrol them into treatment, in partnership with local health services, councils and voluntary groups.

Announcing the deal, Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of [NHS England](#), said: "It's not often that the opportunity arises to completely eradicate a disease, but now the NHS is taking practical action to achieve exactly that. The NHS's sophisticated and unashamedly rigorous negotiation on behalf of both patients and taxpayers means we've now been able to strike affordable deals with our life sciences partners to save many more lives and meaningfully cut health inequalities."

Rachel Halford, Chief Executive of [The Hepatitis C Trust](#), welcomed the deal but called for a Government-backed elimination strategy to support the deal, saying: “The Hepatitis C Trust is delighted with this development. 69% of people who have the virus are currently undiagnosed so the funding in the deal to help find those with hepatitis C and support them into treatment is groundbreaking.

“We believe this deal offers a unique opportunity for all stakeholders – patient organisations, pharmaceutical companies, clinicians, prison healthcare, drug misuse services and others – to work together to reach all those affected.

“To ensure the elimination deal is effective, we now need to see the Government develop an elimination strategy to coordinate the many stakeholders involved.”

Read the [NHS England](#) press release [here](#).



Public Health England

Public Health England releases 2019 report on hepatitis C in England

[Public Health England](#) this month published its annual report on hepatitis C in England. Figures show a drop in the prevalence of chronic hepatitis C to 113,000 patients but the percentage of those living with hepatitis C who are undiagnosed is now estimated to be just under 70%, presenting a significant challenge to meeting the World Health Organization target of 90% being diagnosed by 2030.

The report calls for a ‘radical change’ in the health service’s approach to hepatitis C among people who inject drugs. Only 60% of those surveyed who inject psychoactive drugs reported that they had adequate needle and syringe provision in 2017. Although the level of equipment-sharing has reduced since 2007, there is no evidence of any decline over the last five years.

The report states that opt-out blood-borne virus testing is now fully implemented across the prison estate, with three-quarters (75%) of new receptions offered testing, and one quarter (26%) taking this up.

The full report can be read [here](#). PHE's press release is [here](#). More information

from [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) is [here](#).

HCVAction

HCV Action announces date of next #HCVchat

Dr Stephen Barclay, Consultant Gastroenterologist at [Glasgow Royal Infirmary](#), will take over the [HCV Action](#) Twitter account on Tuesday 21st May from 2pm for a discussion on hepatitis C in Scotland. Dr Barclay will facilitate discussion and answer question on a range of topics, including:

- Examples of best practice in preventing, testing and treating hepatitis C in Scotland
- Community outreach work in Scotland
- Scotland's progress towards achieving hepatitis C elimination

The #HCVchats are regular opportunities for those with experience of hepatitis C or working in a role relevant to hepatitis C care to engage with colleagues and share best practice online.

Anyone can participate in the conversation by tweeting questions and comments using the hashtag [#HCVchat](#) or by tagging the account [@HCVAction](#) from 2pm on 21st May.



Hepatitis C infections could be prevented by reducing transmission in people who inject drugs

Boosting efforts to prevent hepatitis C being transmitted among people who inject drugs could reduce future infections by 42% globally, according to a study by researchers at the [University of Bristol](#), published in [The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology](#).

The researchers used mathematical modelling to estimate how much the sharing of equipment for injecting drug use contributes to the hepatitis C epidemics for 88 countries, which account for 85% of the world's population.

The vast majority of new hepatitis C infections in the UK occur through the sharing of injecting equipment by people who inject drugs. According to the research, if transmissions due to risks associated with injecting drug use was removed, 98% of infections in the UK would be prevented.

The full study is available [here](#), with a summary news story [here](#).

News & Reports

* Public hearings for the [Infected Blood Inquiry](#) begin today (30th April), marking the start of the investigation into why blood products containing viruses such as hepatitis C and HIV were used to treat NHS patients before 1992. The public hearings will last approximately six months, moving to different cities within all four nations of the UK within this period. More information about the hearings can be found [here](#). [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) has published a blog about the background to the inquiry [here](#).

* Solicitors acting on behalf of people who received contaminated blood have urged [NHS England](#) and [Public Health Wales](#) to set up nationwide screening programmes for people currently unaware that they have hepatitis C. Read more [here](#).

* [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) has published its Local Election 2019 Patient Activist Toolkit. The toolkit provides advice and templates to help people campaign for proper funding for services which reduce hepatitis C transmission and for local authorities to use their convening power to help build partnerships to tackle hepatitis C. You can access the toolkit [here](#).

* [Chemist and Druggist](#) has published an update on the pilot project offering hepatitis C testing to drug users using needle exchange services in eight London pharmacies. The project was designed to make testing more accessible to those who have difficulty accessing GP practices and other traditional healthcare settings. After the trial's apparent success, other areas have started to show interest with other hepatitis C pilot services set to launch in pharmacies in Birmingham and Manchester.

Read the full article [here](#).

* Research published in [BMC Medicine](#) has concluded assigning patients to a peer advocate to support them in treatment can improve the rate of engagement of patients with chronic HCV with healthcare services. Read more [here](#).

* Substance misuse service provider [Change Grow Live](#) has written a blog about its collaboration with [Gilead Sciences](#) and the [NHS](#) to increase the number of people accessing screening for hepatitis C, which has led to a 36% increase in testing, a doubling of referrals, and three times the number of people being treated since the partnership was introduced. Read the blog [here](#).

* John Gibbons, Hep C Case Worker at [Groundswell](#) has written about supporting patients with hepatitis C into treatment and why peer support is vital to ensure everyone is able to receive treatment. Read the blog [here](#).

* The [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) this month published its Hepatitis C Annual Epidemiological Report for 2017. The report indicates a 10% decrease in newly reported hepatitis C cases from 2016 to 2017, but also warns of the under-reporting of diagnosed cases and the variation of national testing practices impacting the reliability of this statistic. Headline figures show that 5.6 million Europeans live with chronic hepatitis C, with more than 31,000 recorded cases in 2017. Access the full report in the [HCV Action](#) resource library [here](#).

Share your good practice...

If you would like your service to be featured as a good practice case study on the HCV Action website, have any news to share with colleagues, or would be interested in being an [HCV Action Ambassador](#), please send an email to hcvaction@hepctrust.org.uk.



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