

HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

June 2019



HCV Action hosting National Hepatitis C ODN Stakeholder Event

[HCV Action](#) and the [British Viral Hepatitis Group](#) will host a National Hepatitis C ODN Stakeholder Event on Thursday 4th July. With over 100 registered attendees, the event will bring together ODN representatives from across the country and will feature presentations on a range of topics of relevance to ODNs, focusing particularly on the opportunities and challenges associated with the recently-announced [NHS England](#) hepatitis C elimination deal.

As well as presentations on the elimination deal from Prof Graham Foster, National Clinical Lead for ODNs at [NHS England](#), Dr Douglas Macdonald, ODN Clinical Lead for North Central London, and the three pharmaceutical companies involved in the deal, the event will also feature talks on the patient perspective, the peer support model, and tackling hepatitis C in drug services, prisons and community pharmacies.

Breakout sessions will give attendees the chance to identify challenges and develop solutions across four topic areas: community outreach; reaching ethnic minority groups; treating in prisons; and engaging with local commissioners and other partners.

The event is invitation-only and almost at capacity, but updates will be provided on the day via the [HCV Action Twitter](#) account and via the hashtag #HCVODNevent. A summary report will be produced following the event, which will be available in the [HCV Action](#) resource library.



Calls for pharmacies to be allowed to dispense hepatitis C treatments

The [London Joint Working Group on Substance Use and Hepatitis C](#), a group of expert clinicians and voluntary sector representatives, this month called for legislative change to allow hepatitis C treatments to be dispensed through community pharmacies.

Despite the success of the early phases of the LJWG's pilot project in London pharmacies, which saw drug users' saliva and blood tested for hepatitis C, the group's plans to trial community pharmacists providing treatment on a supervised basis has been stopped by laws which prevent community pharmacies from dispensing the treatment.

In the first trial, half of people who use needle exchanges in the eight pharmacies participating in the project tested positive via saliva tests. In the second trial, a blood test showed that 24% were returning positive tests, showing a chronic infection. 75% of patients involved with this second trial said they would be in favour of receiving treatment in a community pharmacy.

The group has called on the Public Health Minister, Seema Kennedy, to change the law to allow this to happen. As the block is created by secondary legislation, the move would not need to pass through Parliament.

You can read more about the group's call and the previous trials [here](#).



New testing points in Southampton as city targets micro-elimination

[University Hospitals Southampton NHS Foundation Trust](#), [Solent NHS Trust](#) and the [University of Southampton](#) this month launched a new initiative in partnership with [Southampton City Council](#) offering hepatitis C testing at pharmacies throughout the city.

Dr Ryan Buchanan and Dr Charlotte Cook have been training pharmacists to carry out blood spot testing for hepatitis C in Southampton following a successful research trial in the Isle of Wight, as covered in [this HCV Action good practice case study](#). Speaking about the project, Dr Ryan Buchanan said: "It is now within our reach to eliminate the virus from the City of Southampton."

Councillor Dave Shields, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, [Southampton City Council](#), said: "We are delighted that local people will be able to be tested for hepatitis C in pharmacies. Unfortunately, many people have the virus and just don't know until it's too late. Yet testing and treatment are easy – just a finger prick blood test and tablets. We are excited to support Dr Buchanan's team in their work to eliminate hepatitis C".

You can read more [here](#).

World Health Organization Europe collecting good practice in tackling hepatitis C

[WHO Europe](#) is collecting case studies to document examples of good practice in tackling hepatitis C across Europe. These will feed into a document to be published in October this year on the implementation of WHO's action plan on viral hepatitis.

Examples should outline how they support the implementation of the '[Action plan for the health sector response to Viral Hepatitis in the WHO European Region](#)' and be 500-2,000 words long.

To submit your case study, download and fill in the form on the [World Hepatitis Alliance](#) website [here](#) and send it to Mr. Zachary Thomas Gavry at gavryz@who.int, copying in eurohep@who.int and Dr Antons Mozalevskis at mozalevskisa@who.int. Submissions by the 15th July 2019.

News & Reports

* Dr Ahmed Elsharkawy, Chairman of the [British Viral Hepatitis Group](#), has written for the [European Medical Journal](#) about his experience of treating people who inject drugs for hepatitis C. In his opinion piece he says he has found that engaging with the individual through a "casual non-judgemental consultation style" as well as building trust with people who inject drugs is key for successful treatment. Dr Elsharkawy says that the "potential to provide truly transformative care to marginalised and vulnerable individuals ... more than makes up for some of the frustrations that can be felt". Read more [here](#).

* Researchers at the [University of Liverpool](#) are examining how practitioners in addiction services, prison doctors and community pharmacies could be supported in managing drug-drug interactions (DDIs) as they become increasingly involved in prescribing hepatitis C treatments. www.hep-druginteractions.org is a tool they have developed to support DDI management. They are currently asking for feedback on educational gaps that exist around DDI management, how the new practitioner groups involved in prescribing hepatitis C treatments could best be supported and what other resources may be helpful to support effective DDI management. You can email your thoughts to: hepddisurvey@gmail.com.

* The new National Probation Service Health and Social Care Strategy, released this month by [Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service](#), commits to support people leaving prison with a blood-borne virus to continue treatment once released. This is supported by three primary objectives to increase GP

registrations, support national treatment objectives and use internal data to identify the differences in presentation rates between groups.

* Researchers at the [Karolinska Institute](#) in Stockholm have found that early contact with needle exchange programmes is key to prevent the spread of hepatitis C among drug users. According to the study, 50% of people involved in the study were antibody-HCV positive within 2-5 years of beginning injecting drug use. Read more [here](#).

* Research published in the [FASEB Journal](#) by researchers at [Trinity College Dublin](#) outlines the discovery that the hepatitis C virus "ghosts" the immune system. The scientists found that the virus triggers the mechanism which normally regulates the immune response to prevent uncontrolled inflammation. Read more [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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