



VIRAL HEPATITIS AWARENESS RAISING IN THE COMMUNITY

Viral hepatitis - hepatitis B and hepatitis C - is a leading global health threat affecting hundreds of millions of people annually. Both infections slowly attack the liver and if left untreated for many years causes liver scarring, cirrhosis, and liver cancer - one of the fastest growing causes of cancer death in Australia. At the end of 2017, around 230,000 Australians were living with hepatitis B and 180,000 were living with hepatitis C, accounting for 2% of the population. Liver disease also places a significant economic burden on the Australian healthcare system, costing an estimated \$432 million per year.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is spread from an infected person to an uninfected person through blood-to-blood contact, body fluid contact, and from mother to baby during childbirth. The virus is a major cause of premature death worldwide, responsible for over 700,000 deaths in 2015 alone. There is a vaccine that effectively protects against hepatitis B infections, and Australia has high coverage. However, thousands of new hepatitis B infections still occur each year - mostly among migrants and their children from endemic areas where vaccination coverage is not widespread. Indigenous Australians with limited access to healthcare are also particularly at risk. Most people living with hepatitis B do not initially experience noticeable symptoms and therefore remain undiagnosed. Currently there is no cure for hepatitis B, however, early detection and medication can fight the virus and stop liver damage before it occurs.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is spread through blood-to-blood contact only. Key risk groups for hepatitis C are people with a history of drug use, prisoners, Indigenous Australians, people who undertook medical procedures prior to 1990 and migrants from endemic areas. In the last five years, new game-changing direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatments have become available that can easily cure hepatitis C. Treatment is now as simple as just one tablet per day for 3 months and is 95% effective. Since 2016, Australia has cured some 70,000 people with these life-saving medicines. Most people living with hepatitis C also don't experience symptoms and are unaware they are infected. So viral hepatitis is commonly called "the silent epidemic", and needs greater awareness to promote widespread testing.

Elimination

With a vaccine for hepatitis B and a cure for hepatitis C, there is now a once in a lifetime opportunity to eliminate the burden of viral hepatitis. Many countries including Australia have committed to the WHO's targets to *eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by the year 2030* – an achievement that would save millions of lives. However, the number of people being tested and treated is slowing, and action must be taken to find those still living with the deadly viruses.

Stigma is perhaps the greatest barrier to getting individuals engaged in testing and treatment. It is well understood that people avoid talking about viral hepatitis out of fear of judgement or discrimination, which is a serious issue especially when accessing healthcare. De-stigmatising hepatitis B and C will be a crucial step in eliminating the viruses and making it an issue that is more openly talked about. In order to do so, community education and awareness raising is urgently needed.

WE CAN TAKE ACTION AND SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS
ABOUT PREVENTION AND CURE

Be HEP Aware

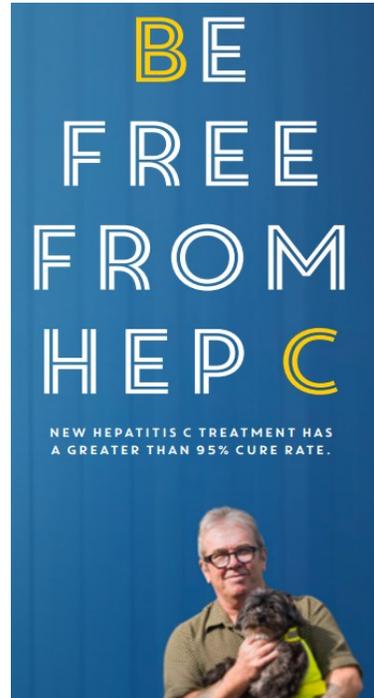
HEPATITIS B

VACCINATE FOR PREVENTION
OR TREAT AFTER TESTING.

FIND OUT MORE.



MAYBE EVEN BECOME HEROES!



Meet Our Rotary HEP Heroes

More than 70 people have volunteered to become HEP Heroes and help raise awareness and fight discrimination against people living with hepatitis.

Read their personal stories or **click on their pictures below** to read their stories, and **become a HEP Hero!**



Brent Allan



Jen Anderson



Graeme Ashton



Neil Boal



Ron Briggs



Sally Cockburn



Rose Coulter



Joffa Corfe

We're partnering with Rotary Club Victoria, and celebrate our Rotary HEP Heroes.