

Media Release – **For Immediate Release**

Friday 22 August 2014



Hepatitis NSW Expresses Strong Disappointment at PBAC Rejection of Sofosbuvir

Hepatitis NSW has today expressed its strong disappointment at the decision by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) to reject approval for the revolutionary hepatitis C drug, sofosbuvir.

In a statement released today, the PBAC announced its decision, from its July 2014 meeting, not to support listing of sofosbuvir on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

“230,000 Australians, including 90,000 people just in NSW, have been waiting for many years for these new, more effective, easier to take, lower side-effect and shorter duration treatments to be approved,” Hepatitis NSW CEO Mr Stuart Loveday said.

“The PBAC is now telling these Australians to wait longer, potentially much longer, before they can receive these life-saving, and life-changing, new drugs.”

The decision to reject approval for sofosbuvir also places Australians living with chronic hepatitis C at significant disadvantage compared to their US and European counterparts.

“Sofosbuvir has been available in the US since December last year. It now seems unlikely it will be available in Australia until mid-2015 at the earliest. Why are Australians living with chronic hepatitis C left waiting so long for their best chance at a cure?” Mr Loveday added.

“It makes no sense to delay access to these treatments, placing at risk the health of people who are ready, and waiting, to go onto treatment now.”

The recently released *Hepatitis Report Card* showed that, without significant intervention, the number of deaths per year attributable to hepatitis C, which already stands at 530 per year, will increase by a massive 230% by 2030.

Currently, only approximately 1% of people living with hepatitis C in Australia are treated each year. It had been hoped approval of the new drug sofosbuvir would help lead to a treatment ‘revolution’, which is vital to avert the worst long-term consequences of Australia’s hepatitis C epidemic.

Hepatitis NSW
working towards a world free of viral hepatitis



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“The PBAC’s rejection of sofosbuvir is deeply disappointing for Hepatitis NSW, its members and the affected community,” Mr Loveday said.

In positive news, the PBAC has recommended that another new treatment, simeprevir, be approved for people living with chronic hepatitis C genotype 1, in combination with interferon and ribavirin.

Simeprevir offers improvement on existing treatments, particularly lower side-effects, but is not effective for people with hepatitis C genotypes 2, 3 or 4.

It is now up to the Government to agree to list simeprevir on the PBS. Hepatitis NSW strongly encourages the Commonwealth Government to do so as quickly as possible.

“The recommendation to approve simeprevir is a small step forward for some Australians living with hepatitis C. But most people have been left waiting for the great leap.” Mr Loveday said.

For further information please contact Stuart Loveday at Hepatitis NSW on 0410 488 144

To access the *Hepatitis Report Card* visit www.liverdangerzone.com.au

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