

PBAC decisions – a mixed bag for Australians living with Hepatitis C

simeprevir (Olysio)

Hepatitis Australia today welcomed the recommendation to add simeprevir (Olysio) to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for the treatment of genotype 1 chronic hepatitis C.

CEO of Hepatitis Australia, Helen Tyrrell, said: “The use of simeprevir as an addition to pegylated interferon and ribavirin to treat people with genotype 1 hepatitis C is an important step forward in the evolution of hepatitis C treatment.

“Simeprevir will make the treatment process both safer and better tolerated than current regimens. This therapy must now be listed on the PBS as soon as possible.”

sofosbuvir (Sovaldi)

Responding to the PBAC decision to reject an application to subsidise the antiviral medication sofosbuvir (Sovaldi), Ms Tyrrell said “it’s a sad day when access to game-changing therapy is denied. This is a bad outcome for people living with hepatitis C”.

Hepatitis Australia called on both the Federal Government and Gilead Sciences to “work together to ensure this curative hepatitis C treatment is made broadly available as soon as possible”.

“We have nationally approved treatment targets and need to get on with the job of increasing treatment in order to avert a liver disease crisis,” she said.

“The well-being of people with hepatitis C should not be jeopardised by blocking access to a cure which is available in other countries. This is plainly unacceptable.

“In the interim, we need a mechanism to fund treatment for Australians with serious liver disease who can’t wait any longer for bureaucratic wheels to turn,” Ms Tyrrell said.

Parliamentary Briefing on new Hepatitis C treatments

Hepatitis Australia will now join with Senator Dean Smith and Senator Lisa Singh to convene a Parliamentary Breakfast Briefing on 23 September to brief politicians on ‘*Costly Cures? The Case for Action on Hepatitis C Treatment*’.

Independent of commercial interests, the briefing will include addresses from World Hepatitis Alliance President Charles Gore and Dr Alex Thompson, Director Gastroenterology Department, St Vincent’s Hospital, Melbourne, as well as people living with hepatitis C.

“It’s important that politicians understand exactly what the Government is being asked to subsidise. There’s no question these therapies come with a sizeable price tag, but investment now will save considerable downstream costs and halt the death toll associated with serious liver disease,” Ms Tyrrell said.

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