
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2016HLTH0028-000616
April 21, 2016

Ministry of Health

B.C. gives \$5 million to expand efforts to curb hepatitis C infection

VANCOUVER – The Province has provided \$5 million to the St. Paul’s Hospital Foundation for a research study on how to reduce new infections of hepatitis C in the province, announced Health Minister Terry Lake today, along with BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BCCfE) director Dr. Julio Montaner.

“This investment will help those at increased risk of re-infection with hepatitis C, by focusing on engagement with the health system, and it will help to evaluate the health outcomes with our current treatment regimens,” said Lake. “Through this project, we are working to improve the lives of those people with hepatitis C.”

“This initiative offers a unique opportunity to potentially curb the rapidly rising toll of hepatitis C in North America,” said Dr. Montaner. “It will inform the next steps needed to improve engagement in care and timely treatment of HCV positive British Columbians to improve patient outcomes.”

The research will focus on individuals in Vancouver who have been successfully cured of hepatitis C, but who have been identified as at increased risk of re-infection. It will also evaluate the impact and outcomes of current hepatitis C treatments, and identify the next steps required to optimize treatment outcomes in B.C.

“Participants will be engaged with the full array of harm reduction and support services available through Vancouver Coastal Health,” said Dr. Patricia Daly, Vancouver Coastal Health’s chief medical health officer and vice president, public health. “We will work with the project team to evaluate how these supports help to prevent re-infection with hepatitis C.”

Under the leadership of Dr. Montaner, the project will be a collaboration between the BCCfE, BC Centre for Disease Control, Vancouver Coastal Health, St. Paul’s Hospital Foundation and University of British Columbia.

“By understanding how to optimize treatment outcomes, we can maximize the individual and societal impact of these very promising therapies,” said Dr. Mel Krajden, medical lead for hepatitis at the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Hepatitis C virus infection can be a life-threatening communicable disease affecting an estimated 50,000-60,000 British Columbians. Approximately 35% of people currently living with hepatitis C may be at higher risk for re-acquiring the virus after successful treatment, including people who inject drugs; men who have sex with men and commercial sex workers.

Modern hepatitis C therapies are highly effective, with cure rates over 95%. However, the risk for re-infection following successful treatment is potentially high among certain groups, unless

they engage in risk reduction practices.

Hepatitis C is the most frequent cause of premature death among reportable infectious diseases in North America, and has become the most frequent cause of premature death among people living with both hepatitis C and HIV.

Learn More:

BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS: <http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca/>

Media Contacts:

Kristy Anderson
Media Relations Manager
Ministry of Health
250 952-1887 (media line)

Caroline Dobuzinskis
BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS
604 682-2344 ext. 66536
Cell: 604 366-6540
cdobuzin@cfenet.ubc.ca

Connect with the Province of B.C. at: www.gov.bc.ca/connect