Gilead to Give Country of Georgia Free Hepatitis C Treatment

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Gilead Sciences will soon provide free hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment to anyone who needs it in the country of Georgia, as part of a case study that hopes to prove its highly effective drugs can completely eradicate the liver disease, Reuters reports.

The U.S. pharmaceutical company will be providing Georgia with Sovaldi (sofosbuvir) and, when approved in the small European nation, Harvoni (ledipasvir). The program aims to cover 5,000 Georgians living with hep C in 2015, with a second phase treating up to 20,000 people a year.

Gilead chose Georgia as a test site partly because the nation has the world's third-largest number of HCV-positive people, behind Egypt and Mongolia. The country's small population and pre-existing medical infrastructure also made it ideal for the experiment. An estimated 7 percent of the nearly 5 million adults in Georgia have a chronic HCV infection.

The goal of the study is to prove to governments and health agencies worldwide how much investment into new drugs can change the landscape of hep C. As of now, Gilead will not be giving out free HCV treatment in any other countries.

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