Hepatitis C: Australia - the groundswell for DAA access

September 29, 2015 By Grace Campbell

Rarely do we feel like we get to be an active part of rapid societal change in our staid middle of the road country. Change seems to occur elsewhere. If it happens here (the here in point being Australia) it doesn't appear to have the urgency of change in other places.

But times are changing here in Australia for people with hepatitis C.

There is a groundswell of action. Anyone who has half an ear on the radio and half an eye on the paper or tv will know hepatitis C has been hitting the news and hitting it hard. Organisations and individuals are coming out in support of the government listing new direct acting antivirals (DAAs) on the PBS.

Only today a letter signed by 27 organisations including the Australian Hepatology Association, Hepatitis Australia, the Gastroenterological Society of Australia including the Australian Liver Association and many others was sent to the Hon Sussan Ley MP, the Minister for Health. It calls for the Federal Government to list the new drugs on the PBS so all Australians who need them can have access.

There are interviews happening in the main stream media: tv, newspapers and radio. Only today my friend Steve, a fellow traveller on the hep C road did two interviews on the radio; one with ABC's AM program, the other with ABC New England North West.

Some of us have been able to access these new drugs thanks to proactive doctors and liver clinics who have gone in to bat for us. I am very grateful that I have had access to these amazing new drugs, as is Steve. But we don't believe that lucky or severity of illness should play any part in people gaining access. These drugs should be available for all who need it.

No one should have to become so sick that they can no longer work to get access.

No one should have to suffer end stage liver disease to get access.

No one should have to face the fear that I faced when I thought the virus would kill me, before they get access.

The peak organisations such as Hepatitis Australia and Hepatitis NSW are working incredibly hard to push this forward. Advocates such as Steve are spending much of their time and a significant amount of their energy putting their story in the public eye.

It's a humbling feeling to play even the smallest part in raising awareness of hepatitis C and its effects on

people and the lives they live. I feel honoured to raise my voice in support of this vitally important campaign for access and justice.

We can’t remain silent any longer. If we want this cure, it’s up to us. If we don’t fight for it, no one else will fight for us. Let’s speak up in honour of those who have gone before us. Let’s speak up for those who will need this treatment in the future. Let’s speak for our families and ourselves.

In the words of Dylan Thomas, “Do not go gentle into that good night”.

We need this. Let’s make it happen.

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