Hepatitis C: Australian treatment rates (and other fascinating data)

June 10, 2016 By Grace Campbell

The Kirby Institute has released its most recent report into treatment rates for hepatitis C (June 2016). The Australian federal government approved the use of direct acting antivirals and placed them on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in early March 2016. Australians with hepatitis C are able to access treatment through their GP, a specialist or a liver clinic at a hospital at a greatly reduced rate (approximately $40 per month or less if they are on a low income). This universal access, including treatment by generalist doctors for all but complicated cases, has lead to a significant take-up of treatment.

A total of 6,503 patient PBS initial prescriptions were processed for reimbursement in March-April 2016. Based on extrapolation of wholesale data to PBS reimbursement data, to account for the time lag in reporting, an estimated 13,000 – 16,250 patients initiated hepatitis C treatment in March-April 2016.*

Look at those numbers: 13,000 - 16,250 people potentially cured of hepatitis C.

The email I received from Hepatitis NSW stated:

“There is no doubt the initial months have been incredible in terms of patient numbers initiated (we have some very preliminary evidence that May numbers are similar to March and April). There undoubtedly will be some reduction over coming months, but I am now estimating (every month it goes up) that in Australia during 2016 we should be able to initiate 40,000 patients on treatment. This would represent 17% of the chronic HCV pool and would easily outstrip other countries in Year 1 of IFN-free DAA access (e.g. US and Spain treated around 7%, and even Portugal which has similar broad eligibility, but not GP prescribing treated <10%).”

It’s very exciting to be part of this first wave of successful treatment. I didn’t think I could imagine Australia free of hepatitis C, but maybe it’s a possibility. We can but hope.

I’ll be sure to link to the report when I find an online copy of it.

*quoted from the Kirby Institute newsletter

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http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/hepatitis-c-australian-treatment-rates-fascinating-data