Hepatitis C Treatment in Latvia

March 29, 2018 By Greg Jefferys

Over the past three years I have been very aware of the situation for Hepatitis C treatment in Latvia because on some levels the situation has evolved in a very good way. Let me give you a little background.

When I first began helping people around the world access generic Hepatitis C medicines Latvia was one of the European countries that prohibited the importation of generic Hep C medicines. Fortunately it was not too difficult to smuggle medicine into Latvia so I supplied a number of people there via various channels. But it was frustrating because neighbouring countries like Lithuania, Estonia and such all had quite favourable rules for importing medicines for personal use. Often people from Latvia were forced to travel to Lithuania to get their generic Hep C medicines.

About 2% of the population in Latvia is infected with Hepatitis C, that is to say that one in every 50 Latvians has Hep C. It is a very serious health problem for Latvia.

In Latvia the predominant Hep C genotype is G1, with Hep C genotype 1 making up about 80% of the total Hep C infections in Latvia.

Click here to view a table of HCV prevalence/infected population in Eastern Europe (adjusted for the adult population)

The situation for accessing generic Hepatitis C treatment in Latvia changed dramatically when one Latvian lady, a nurse, brought the issue into the public eye. This nurse, who had contracted Hep C through her work, could not access treatment through the Latvian Health system because she was not sick enough. She needed to have a liver fibrosis score of F3 or F4 to access treatment. So, of course, she tried to cure her Hep C by smuggling generic Hep C medicines from India into Latvia. Her Hep C meds were seized by Latvia Customs and they refused to release them to her. Her frustration and despair and anger was profound. Here was her cure being blocked at the border by the very people who refused to offer her treatment through the health service she worked for. THe Latvian government was saying “Even though you were infected with Hepatitis C working in our hospitals we will not treat you… further more we will block your access to any form of treatment that you wish to pay for yourself.”

The furious nurse went to the Latvian press and when the Latvian news media heard of the story all hell broke loose!

Here was a Latvian nurse who had contracted Hep C through the course of her work, who the

government health service would not treat because she did not have cirrhosis and yet the government was preventing her from buying the medicine that would cure her. There was public outrage and the President of Latvia stepped into the storm and made a decree that any Latvian could import generic Hepatitis C treatment if they had a prescription from a Latvian doctor. It was simple and common sense.

It was a wonderful solution.

So Hepatitis C treatment in Latvia was now possible with generic DAAs and a number of Latvians began to source their medication from India.

However Big Pharma would not lay down and let this move unchallenged and the beast began its usual tactic of spreading rumours about the reliability and safety of generic Hep C treatments from India. It is a common tactic of Big Pharma around the world. The beast uses it vast wealth to corrupt and to influence.

And so today, even though it is quite easy for Latvians to import generic Hep C medicines into Latvia not many do so. This is because the information is not flowing that affordable generic Hep C meds have exactly the same cure rates as the expensive brand versions. This is because people are being made fearful that they might buy fake medicines or be the victim of some kind of fraud. Fear is always a favourite weapon of Big Pharma.

Click here to read a letter received this week from a lady in Latvia, it explains quite well the situation for Hepatitis C treatment in Latvia.

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