

Spain vows hepatitis C action after calls for new drugs

January 12 2015

Spain's government Monday promised new measures to fight hepatitis C, following protests by patients who complained authorities were denying them the latest drugs to treat the deadly liver disease.

A new committee will draw up a proposal within three weeks of examining the extent of the illness and clinical criteria, aiming to "include newly authorised drugs" in treatment plans, the health ministry said in a statement.

But it did not specify whether it would widen access to the latest generation of [hepatitis](#) drugs to more patients as campaigners in Spain and other countries are demanding.

The new committee of experts, patients and health officials was set up after weeks of protests by hepatitis C sufferers, who said public spending cuts were denying thousands of patients access to the drugs.

Campaigners say the new generation of drugs is twice as effective as older medication in treating the illness, but also more expensive—costing tens of thousands of euros per patient.

The ministry did not say how many patients might get access to recent drugs under the new plan. It had earlier estimated the number at up to 6,000, but insisted on Monday that was not a maximum limit.

Authorities say 50,000 people in Spain have been diagnosed with the

disease, but estimate that 700,000 people may be carrying the illness without having been diagnosed.

"When we know the extent of the problem we will know how to fund the treatment," the ministry's senior health official, Ruben Moreno, said in the statement.

"But it will be a clinical decision, not an economic or political one."

There is currently no vaccine for hepatitis C, which is caused by a virus that can be caught from contaminated blood, and can lead to [chronic liver disease](#).

The Platform for Hepatitis C Sufferers says 12 people die each day from hepatitis C in Spain.

Dozens of people infected with the virus have been occupying the October 12 Hospital in southern Madrid for more than three weeks demanding the government authorise doctors to prescribe the [new drugs](#) more widely.

The protesters blame the lack of the treatment on tough public spending cuts in health and other sectors by Spain's conservative government in the recent economic crisis.

© 2015 AFP

Citation: Spain vows hepatitis C action after calls for new drugs (2015, January 12) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-01-spain-vows-hepatitis-action-drugs.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.