

Latest research shows Australia on track to cure hepatitis C

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Credit: University of New South Wales

More Australians have been treated for hepatitis C in the past 12 months than the last decade combined, following the listing of a new generation therapy on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

A report released today by the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney found more than 30,000 Australians were treated for their hepatitis C virus infection in 2016 – a massive increase on the 2,000–3,000 people with hepatitis C treated annually prior to the listing.

The report, Monitoring Hepatitis C Treatment Uptake in Australia, provides information on the first year of the direct-acting antiviral (DAA) hepatitis C [treatment](#) program in Australia.

Professor Gregory Dore, Head of the Viral Hepatitis Clinical Research Program at the Kirby Institute, said Australia has achieved one of the most rapid uptakes of treatment worldwide.

"We have a unique opportunity to eliminate a major infectious disease, potentially the first opportunity through treatment intervention," said Professor Dore.

"Providing Australians living with hepatitis C ongoing access to effective, well-tolerated treatment will help curb transmission of the virus, reduce rates of liver disease, and eliminate hepatitis C as a major public health issue within a decade."

The report also shows that an increasing proportion of patients are being treated by general practitioners.

"We're really pleased to see increasing numbers of GPs prescribing hepatitis C treatments," said Professor Dore.

"This means greater access to treatment and care for people living with [hepatitis C](#)."

"Hepatitis C is particularly problematic in marginalised and stigmatised populations, including Indigenous Australians, those who are

incarcerated, and people who inject drugs. Ninety per cent of newly acquired hep C cases are among people who inject drugs.

"Efforts must also be directed towards strategies that prevent infections from occurring, such as providing greater access to clean needles and syringes and drug dependency treatment for people who inject drugs," said Professor Dore.

More information: Monitoring hepatitis C treatment uptake in Australia. [kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default...sletter_Issue6_2.pdf](http://kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/sletter_Issue6_2.pdf)

Provided by University of New South Wales

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