



**Positive Living North**  
**No khēyoh t'sih'en t'sehena Society**

# Hep C Newsletter

SUMMER 2011 EDITION

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

**July 28, 2011**

**World Hepatitis  
Day**

**September 18 and  
22, 2011 AIDS  
Walks Hazelton,  
Smithers and  
Moricetown**

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## Positive Living North Bulkley Valley

The Hepatitis C Support Group is now called the Members Support Day Sessions are held every Wednesday from 1:00pm—2:30pm A light lunch is served. It's a time for individuals to share their experience and gain education

Hepatitis C Support Group update.  
 We currently do not have a Hepatitis C Support Group. This is due to the death of the key facilitator and founder of the Support Group.  
 If there is enough interest in forming a new Hepatitis C Support group PLN would assist in the facilitation of this initiative.

**The Scotia Bank AIDS Walk 2011 is coming soon! Mark your calendars with these dates:**

Hazelton AIDS Walk will take place on Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at the high school at 12:30 and start our walk at 1pm. We will end at the Anglican Hall, where we will have great music, food, prizes and guest speakers. As usual, we will have locally designed T-Shirts. This year our designer is Dora Jack from Glen Vowell.

The Smithers AIDS Walk will take place on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> at noon. We will walk from the Dze L'Kant Friendship Hall, around Smithers and back. We will have a nice lunch, information, prizes and free T-Shirts. Come join the fun!

The Moricetown AIDS Walk will also take place on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. We will meet at the multiplex at 3pm to walk through the community. We will have snacks, information,

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# Studies: New treatments may increase cure rates of hepatitis C

(Taken from Yahoo news of Jan. 18/2011 by Jade Walker)

People suffering from hepatitis C, a disease caused by a blood-borne virus that attacks the liver, may soon have access to a cure.

Most people get the disease by using dirty needles, either to inject illegal drugs or while obtaining a tattoo or piercing. Others contracted hepatitis C from an infected blood transfusion or organ transplants before blood was screened for the disease (screening started in 1992). You cannot get hepatitis C from casual contact such as hugging, kissing, sneezing, coughing or sharing food or drink.

170 million people worldwide have chronic hepatitis C, which is the leading cause of liver transplants. According to the Mayo Clinic, many patients may have the disease and not even realize it because they either show no symptoms (tiredness, joint and belly pain and jaundice) or the symptoms don't manifest for many years. Yet hepatitis C is a serious illness.

The two-drug method currently used to treat the disease—ribavirin pills plus injections of interferon-alpha—only cures about 40% of patients. However, new major studies show that adding a third drug, either Vertex Pharmaceuticals' telaprevir or Merck & Co's boceprevir, can increase cure rates by as high as 75% because they can block an enzyme the virus needs to reproduce. When taken in conjunction with the standard medications, these new drugs may also allow some patients to cut treatment time in half to six months.

The side effects of existing treatments include: sleeplessness, fever, muscle and body aches, anxiety, mouth sores, dehydration, irritability, headaches, depression, dry mouth, sore throat, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and hair loss. And the new drugs may cause additional side effects, such as a rash and/or anemia. The drug makers haven't announced what the drugs will cost either; the price of treatment can already cost \$30,000 (before a liver transplant).

The Food and Drug Administration is expected to approve the drugs this summer, a move that is prompting some newly diagnosed patients to hold off on treatment until the new drug therapy is available.

"We're entering a whole new era of therapy," Dr. John Ward, hepatitis chief at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told The Associated Press. "We really want to begin that clarion call for action for this population who's at risk." (This is American information but the drugs will be available in Canada soon)

Who should be tested for hepatitis C?

- Anyone who has ever injected drugs
- Recipients of clotting factor concentrates made before July 1992
- People who received blood transfusions or organ transplants before July 1992.
- Patients who have ever received long-term hemodialysis treatment
- People who have HIV
- People with signs and symptoms of liver disease
- Children born to mothers who have hepatitis C
- Anyone who has had a non-professional tattoo or piercing where needles or ink were shared

# World Hepatitis Day

July 28, 2011

The first official WHO World Hepatitis Day is marked to increase the awareness and understanding of viral hepatitis and the diseases that it causes. It provides an opportunity to focus on specific actions such as:

- strengthening prevention, screening and control of viral hepatitis and its related diseases;
- increasing hepatitis B vaccine coverage and integration into national immunization programmes; and
- coordinating a global response to hepatitis.

Hepatitis viruses A, B, C, D and E can cause acute and chronic infection and inflammation of the liver leading to cirrhosis and liver cancer. These viruses constitute a major global health risk with around 350 million people being chronically infected with hepatitis B and around 170 million people being chronically infected with hepatitis C.

*We would like to hear from you!*

We welcome you personal stories, poetry, ideas and thoughts.

Deadline for next issue is September 1<sup>st</sup>!

Please send correspondences to:  
mmonds@postitivelivingnorth.ca  
250-877-0042

## New Hep C Drug Treatment Time Telaprevir May Also Improve Effective- ness of Treatment.

CBC News June 29, 2011

Adding a new hepatitis C drug to standard medications improves the effectiveness of treatment for the liver disease, an international trial involving a doctor and patients from British Columbia suggests.

Hepatitis C is usually transmitted by blood, often through piercings, tattoos or injection drug use. It can lead to scarring of the liver, which in some cases forces patients to seek a transplant. About 30% of people with the infection who need a transplant die while waiting for a new liver, said Dr. Eric Yoshida, head of gastroenterology at the University of British Columbia and Vancouver General Hospital. Yoshida was a co-author of a Phase 3 trial published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The study randomly assigned either a placebo or the treatment without either the patients or researchers knowing who received the drug—the gold standard form of clinical research. Until now, treatments were less than 50 percent effective. “Now you’re approaching 80 percent. For most of these patients, this means that the likelihood of clearing the virus and needing a liver transplant or developing liver cancer suddenly goes way down,” said Yoshida, who also leads the B.C. hepatitis program.

### Side-effect comparison

The new drug, called telaprevir, was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in May, and Yoshida expects Health Canada will soon follow.

The standard treatment for hepatitis C has been a combination of two drugs, pegylated-interferon and ribavirin, which are given for a year. If telaprevir is added to the cocktail, the treatment time is reduced to six months, the researchers found.

In the study, anemia, gastrointestinal side-effects, and skin rashes occurred at a higher rate among patients receiving telaprevir than among those receiving peginterferon-ribavirin alone.

The overall rate of discontinuation of the treatment regimen due to side-effects was 10 percent in the telaprevir groups compared with seven percent in the other group, the study’s authors found.

Nearly a quarter of a million Canadians have the disease. Several study authors said they had financial ties to pharmaceutical companies, including Tobotec and Vertex Pharmaceuticals, which funded the research.



*Former Pamela Anderson announced she has hepatitis C in 2002. A new drug is helping to reduce treatment time, researchers have found. J.P. Moczulski/Canadian Press*





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**Are you interested in becoming a member of Positive Living North?**

**"SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM—Please mail to PLN address listed above**

**\*\*ALL MEMBERSHIP AND TELEPHONE LIST INFORMATION IS HELD SECURE FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF POSITIVE LIVING NORTH\*\***

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subscribe to the aims and goals of Positive Living North: No khēyoh t'sih'en t'sehena Society, and agree to follow the Rules and By-Laws of the society as set out in the Constitution, registered in Victoria, under the Provincial Society Act.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE DATE

Please enclose the \$5.00 membership fee. Those who choose to disclose to the membership coordinator that they are living with HIV/AIDS will have their membership fee waived. Please indicate the appropriate type of membership:

Individual Member  Organization Member  Corporate Member  Member/Volunteer

Membership Fee: Paid \_\_\_\_\_ To Be Collected \_\_\_\_\_ Waived \_\_\_\_\_ Date Paid \_\_\_\_\_

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