

# MANAGING CHRONIC HEPATITIS C

A FACT SHEET FOR GPs, OTHER MEDICAL  
PRACTITIONERS IN THE ACT AND PATIENTS

Last updated 1 December 2017

## INTRODUCTION

A new generation of direct-acting antiviral medications to treat people living with chronic hepatitis C is now available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). These medicines are more effective and better tolerated than the older medicines, and experts predict that with the necessary increase in treatment access, hepatitis C could be eradicated in Australia as a public health concern within a generation.

## THE ROLE FOR GPs

To maximise the benefits of new treatments, non specialist-centric treatment models must become common-place. The new medicines are available through both the PBS General Schedule ('Section 85') and the Section 100 (S100) Highly Specialised Drugs Program.

As such, GPs may now prescribe the new hepatitis C medicines under the General Schedule (Section 85).

## ARE GPs REQUIRED TO REFER PATIENTS TO SPECIALISTS (LIVER CLINICS)?

No. Under the old S100 arrangements with interferon-based treatments, patients were routinely referred from GPs to liver clinics for treatment and monitoring. Now patients may be treated by a medical practitioner (including GP) experienced in the treatment of chronic hepatitis C infection, or in consultation with a gastroenterologist, hepatologist or infectious diseases physician experienced in the treatment of chronic hepatitis C. In many cases, a patient will not need to have attended an appointment with a specialist prior to being prescribed

one of the new medicines by a medical practitioner.

## GP ACCESS TO SPECIALIST ADVICE

ACT Health has developed a 'remote consultation form' for GPs to optimise patient care and satisfy government regulation of non-specialist prescribing.

The form is available via:

### Health Pathways ACT & Southern NSW

All currently registered health practitioners may register and access the HealthPathways portal by secure login and password.

[actsnsw.healthpathways.org.au](http://actsnsw.healthpathways.org.au)

### ACT Health's GP Liaison Unit

[gpliaison@act.gov.au](mailto:gpliaison@act.gov.au)  
(02) 6244 4183

## PATIENT ACCESS TO TRANSIENT ELASTOGRAPHY (FIBROSCAN®) AND SHEAR WAVE ELASTOGRAPHY

**Transient elastography** (Fibroscan®) is performed at the Canberra Hospital Gastroenterology and Hepatology Unit. A 'Fibroscan request form' is available from:

### ACT Health's GP Liaison Unit

[gpliaison@act.gov.au](mailto:gpliaison@act.gov.au)  
(02) 6244 4183

### Health Pathways ACT & Southern NSW portal

[actsnsw.healthpathways.org.au](http://actsnsw.healthpathways.org.au)

**Shear wave elastography** is a reliable quantitative and non-invasive method of assessing hepatocellular damage. It is offered by:

### Garran Medical Imaging

Suite 1, 2 Garran Place, Garran, ACT  
(02) 6225 7070  
[admin@garranmedicalimaging.com.au](mailto:admin@garranmedicalimaging.com.au)  
[garranmedicalimaging.com.au](http://garranmedicalimaging.com.au)

### Canberra Imaging Group

Various locations in ACT  
Patient Booking Service 1300 788 508  
[www.canberraimaging.com.au](http://www.canberraimaging.com.au)

### Universal Medical Imaging

Various locations in ACT  
(02) 6126 5000  
[admin@umic.com.au](mailto:admin@umic.com.au)  
[umic.com.au](http://umic.com.au)

## OTHER TOOLS AND SUPPORTS AVAILABLE TO GPs

A range of tools and supports is available to help GPs with information about the new hepatitis C medicines.

### Health Pathways ACT & Southern NSW

HealthPathways is an evidence-based online health information portal for GPs and others at point-of-care to help assess, manage and refer patients. The portal includes detailed local pathways for hepatitis C and the ACT Health 'remote consultation form' for seeking specialist advice and approval to treat. All currently registered health practitioners may register and access the HealthPathways portal by secure login and password.  
[actsnsw.healthpathways.org.au](http://actsnsw.healthpathways.org.au)

### Australian Recommendations for the Management of Hepatitis C Virus Infection: a consensus statement (January 2017)

This comprehensive Consensus Statement was prepared by the Gastroenterological Society of Australia (Australian Liver Association), the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases, the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine, the Australasian

Hepatology Association, Hepatitis Australia and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.  
[asid.net.au/documents/item/1208](http://asid.net.au/documents/item/1208)

### Hepatitis C Medicines Fact Sheet for Community Based Prescribers

The Department of Health has produced this advice for community-based prescribers of new hepatitis C medicines.  
[pbs.gov.au/info/healthpro/explanatory-notes/general-statement-hep-c](http://pbs.gov.au/info/healthpro/explanatory-notes/general-statement-hep-c)

### Managing Hepatitis C in Primary Care

This free online training module will provide GPs and others with training in the diagnosis, treatment and ongoing management of people with chronic hepatitis C infection.  
[learn.nps.org.au/mod/page/view.php?id=7278](http://learn.nps.org.au/mod/page/view.php?id=7278)

## WHAT ARE THE NEW MEDICINES?

The PBS listed medications are:

- sofosbuvir + ledipasvir (Harvoni®)
- sofosbuvir (Sovaldi®)
- daclatasvir (Daklinza®)
- ribavirin (Ibavyr®)
- ombitasvir + paritaprevir + ritonavir + dasabuvir (VIEKIRA PAK®)
- grazoprevir + elbasvir (Zepatier®).

# COMMUNITY REFERRAL OPTIONS



Hepatitis ACT is Canberra's community hepatitis organisation, funded by ACT Health to deliver a comprehensive range of hepatitis-related programs and no-cost supports.

(02) 6230 6344  
36 David St, Turner  
(opposite the O'Connor Shops)  
[info@hepatitisACT.com.au](mailto:info@hepatitisACT.com.au)  
[www.hepatitisACT.com.au](http://www.hepatitisACT.com.au)



CAHMA is the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy – Canberra's peer-based drug user organisation, run by and for people who use, or have used, illicit drugs. Services include peer support, education, representation and advocacy.

(02) 6253 3643  
Northpoint Plaza, 16/8 Chandler St, Belconnen  
[info@cahma.org.au](mailto:info@cahma.org.au)  
[www.cahma.org.au](http://www.cahma.org.au)