



**National Hepatitis C Treatment Awareness Week
23-27 May 2005**

ONLINE LAUNCH TO COMBAT FEAR OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

Embargoed until 9am Monday May 23

To combat the fear people with hepatitis C often have of disclosure, an online community launch of the first National Hepatitis C Awareness Week 23-27 May will be held on-line on Monday 23 May at 6pm EST.

National Hepatitis C Awareness Week is promoting hepatitis C treatment awareness to people with hepatitis C and general practitioners.

Some people with hepatitis C and their GPs are not aware of the treatment for hepatitis C, let alone a treatment that can cure the virus in around 60% of people undertaking the treatment.

The on-line community launch is particularly aimed at people with hepatitis C living in rural areas. It provides an opportunity to ask questions and chat to experts about hepatitis C treatment from the privacy of their own 'lounge rooms'. The C-Change report into hepatitis C related discrimination found that people in rural areas are reluctant to disclose about their hepatitis C because of a fear of discrimination and their privacy being breached.

People who log on to the launch will be able to ask questions of Dr Greg Dore, an infectious diseases clinician at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, Dr Rodger Brough is a GP in rural Victoria, and Mary Fenech is a clinical nurse consultant at the liver unit at the Royal Brisbane Women's and Children's Hospital.

There are over 50,000 people eligible for the publicly funded treatment and yet less than 1% of the quarter of a million Australians with the virus have ever accessed treatment.

The management of treatment and its side effects has improved dramatically in recent years, a fact which is not widely known amongst people with hepatitis C. In Australia, around 90% of people undertaking this treatment, do manage the side effects and complete treatment.



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While not everyone with hepatitis C will need treatment, it is important that people are able to access information and support to decide if it is for them.

To join our presenters for the on-line launch of National Hepatitis C Awareness Week on Monday 23 May, go to <http://hepatitisc.communityzero.com/>

6pm-7.30pm in the eastern states

5.30 – 7pm in SA and NT

4pm – 6.30pm in WA

For more information about Awareness Week, the online launch or to interview a representative from the Australian Hepatitis Council, a person with Hepatitis C who has undergone treatment or a clinician, contact Danielle Elston on 0423 208 289

Awareness Week – www.hepcawareness.net.au

Hepatitis C Media Guide – www.hepatitisaustralia.com/media