



Australian Hepatitis Council

## MEDIA RELEASE

15 August 2005

### ***Are you a transplant donor risk – know your hep C status***

A recent article in The Herald-Sun (*Crisis hits transplants*, 13 August) should alert Australians to the possibility of being one of the estimated 250,000 living with hepatitis C.

While organ donations remain at the very low level reported, there will continue to be an agonising choice for doctors, patients and relatives about the possibility of contracting this infection through a transplant.

People living with hepatitis C are among those most likely to need transplants as the disease can progress to cirrhosis of the liver and/or liver cancer so it is vital that they are aware of their status.

Effective treatments are now available for hepatitis C and if everyone at risk of having the infection and everyone who knows they have the infection finds out about treatment, the numbers of transplants from donors with hepatitis C can decrease.

This means that blood infected with hepatitis C must come into direct contact with the bloodstream of another person. Even the smallest amounts of blood can transmit hepatitis C.

Transmission can occur through:

- sharing and equipment used to inject drugs
- unsterile tattooing, body piercing and skin penetration procedures
- household practices (such as sharing razor blades and toothbrushes)
- occupational procedures (eg, needlestick and sharps injuries)
- certain sexual activities
- mother to baby.

Hepatitis C is **NOT** transmitted through:

- hugging
- kissing
- sneezing
- coughing
- other social contact
- sharing food and drinks
- eating utensils
- toilet facilities.

**Media contacts**

Stuart Loveday, President, Australian Hepatitis Council,  
0410 488 144

Barbara Sekules, National Media & Communications Officer,  
0411 877 623

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PO Box 716 Woden ACT 2606 Ph: (02) 6232 4257 Fax: (02) 6232 4318  
[www.hepatitisaustralia.com/media](http://www.hepatitisaustralia.com/media)