

Time matters when a cure is possible

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We are close to 10 years away from the World Health Organization's (WHO) mandate of curing the world of hepatitis C. In 2016, Canada was one of the 194 countries that committed to eradicating the disease by 2030.

While much progress has been made toward eliminating hepatitis C, many of the over 250,000 Canadians who have hepatitis C have yet to be diagnosed and cured. The clock is ticking particularly for priority populations which include Indigenous people, people who inject or use drugs, immigrants and newcomers, people with experience in the prison system and people born between 1945 and 1975. Canada will not want to be a country that does not achieve elimination.

The good news is that the building blocks are in place, including a Blueprint to inform hepatitis C elimination efforts in Canada, short duration medication that is covered by our public healthcare system, and a WHO mandate. Countries around the world, including Japan, Egypt, Mongolia, the United Kingdom and South Korea, are showing that disease eradication can be achieved – it's time for a Canadian action plan based on provincial plans.

We support a wide range of initiatives to help elevate and prioritize hepatitis C elimination and we are particularly proud of our partnership with the province of Prince Edward Island (PEI). PEI is a shining example of how elimination can be achieved. In fact, PEI is the first province to be on track and will reach hepatitis C elimination sooner by 2025.

Started in 2015, Prince Edward Island's hepatitis C treatment approach is focused on creating a patient-centered model of care that will enable the province to eliminate hepatitis C. It seeks to mobilize the existing provincial collaborative medical resources, access points, and clinical expertise for the purposes of producing a cost-effective model of care that has resulted in optimal outcomes for the treatment of hepatitis C. Since the province's 10-year hepatitis C program was launched in 2015, 45 per cent of Islanders living with HCV have been treated. PEI also seeks to identify and treat core transmitter populations to minimize further hepatitis C infection.

Building meaningful elimination initiatives with our partners will help us reach our shared goal of elimination by 2030. Let's work together to ensure that Canada is one of the countries that is on track for the WHO 2030 elimination objective.



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