

Achieving Timely Hepatitis C Elimination in Canada

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Hepatitis C, commonly referred to as HCV, is a virus impacting the liver. It is characterized by inflammation of the liver, and, if left untreated, it can lead to cirrhosis and eventually cancer.ⁱ An estimated 250,000 Canadians live with chronic HCV, with as many as 44% currently unaware of their positive status.ⁱⁱ

In May 2016, Canada signed on to the World Health Organization's (WHO) first-ever Global Hepatitis Strategy, aiming to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030.ⁱⁱⁱ To make this goal a reality, the federal government must alleviate the pressure on provincial and territorial health systems and share accountability in meeting outlined targets.

In recognition of World Hepatitis Day on July 28, AbbVie is committed to shining a light on Canadians living with HCV, acknowledging the existence of HCV as a treatable public health threat, and encouraging policy makers to commit to recommendations ensuring the timely elimination of HCV in Canada.

Action Hepatitis Canada, a national coalition of organizations responding to viral hepatitis, developed [The Progress Toward Viral Hepatitis Elimination in Canada report](#), designed to hold the government accountable for timely HCV elimination. The report outlines key metrics on which to evaluate elimination progress in Canada, specific to each province.

The impact of achieving timely elimination in all provinces is significant. Priority populations most impacted by HCV, including Indigenous peoples, those in contact with the federal prison system, and newcomers to Canada,

receive health coverage from the federal government.^{iv} Ensuring that the federal government and its associated health agencies are aligned on recommended next steps to reach timely elimination is crucial to supporting the health outcomes of these populations.

The Progress report outlines several next steps for federal leadership to support meeting the WHO's elimination goal:

- Increased planning is needed to set strategies, targets, and indicators in consultation with priority populations to measure progress toward timely elimination.^v
- Federal testing guidelines should be updated to include recommendations for Canadians born between 1945 and 1975.^{vi}
- Expanded funding to HCV-specific public health and harm reduction programming in Canada is needed.^{vii}
- Fund and increase efforts to access updated HCV surveillance in every province and territory.^{viii}

AbbVie is committed to highlighting the important work of Action Hepatitis Canada in encouraging policy makers to act in support of timely HCV elimination. Implementing the recommendations outlined within the Progress report is a critical first step in sustaining Canada's momentum toward timely HCV elimination, which will support the overall health of Canadians and alleviate the financial strain on our health care system.

[i] World Health Organization. Hepatitis C. 2022. Accessed June 30, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/hepatitis-c>.

[ii] Canadian Network on Hepatitis C (CanHepC). Blueprint to inform hepatitis C elimination efforts in Canada. 2019. Accessed June 30, 2022. Retrieved from https://www.canhepc.ca/sites/default/files/media/documents/blueprint_hcv_2019_05.pdf.

[iii] Action Hepatitis Canada. Progress Toward Viral Hepatitis Elimination in Canada: 2021 Report. 2021. Accessed June 30, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.actionhepatitiscanada.ca/progressreport.html>.

[iv] Action Hepatitis Canada. Progress Toward Viral Hepatitis Elimination in Canada: 2021 Report. 2021. Accessed June 30, 2022. Retrieved from https://www.actionhepatitiscanada.ca/uploads/8/3/3/9/83398604/ahc_progress_report_2021.pdf.

[v] Action Hepatitis Canada. Progress Toward Viral Hepatitis Elimination in Canada: 2021 Report. 2021.

[vi] Ibid.

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] Ibid.



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