



European Liver
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The new antiviral drugs for hepatitis C: out of reach for many European patients?

Belgium, 13th January 2014 - ELPA, the European Liver Patients' Association, voices growing concern that prices likely to be set for the new generation of direct acting antivirals mean that a cure for hepatitis C remains out of reach for most patients in Europe.

As drugs currently in pipeline edge closer to market, there has been growing concern among ELPA members with regards to the cost of these medications when/if they become available in Europe.

Scientific advances in recent years have meant that hepatitis C can now be effectively treated and, with the use of new treatments, can in 80-90% of cases be cured. However, the cost of these new treatments will mean it is out of the reach of countries where resources are limited or where governments are only willing to reimburse for less effective but cheaper medications.

Speaking at a recent members' meeting, ELPA President, Mrs Tatjana Reic, welcomed the scientific advances of recent years but noted that drugs are only effective if available and used. Mrs Reic highlighted the fact that market availability does not necessarily equate with accessibility and affordability for patients. "If the majority of HCV patients cannot access novel treatments then their existence has no impact on the severity of the growing epidemic of Hepatitis C" she noted.

Giving a specific example, the cost of Sofosuvir (Sovaldi) in the US, where it was approved by the FDA in December, it is estimated that the average cost of treatment is in the region of 84,000 USD (for 12 weeks of treatment). This price it is out of reach for most European patients because many EU countries are in economic difficulties. ELPA emphasised that access to medication was the key for cure, and that the newer better treatments had to be available to **all** patients. Ivan Gardini, ELPA's Vice-President stated that "governments need to work together with industry, patients and all other stakeholders to ensure that innovative drugs have reasonable costs and are delivered to all patients living with hepatitis C. No innovation in treatment for hepatitis C can be considered such if only a few patients have access to it".

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About ELPA:

ELPA (the European Liver Patients' Association)'s aim is to promote the interests of people with liver disease. It was established in 2005 and has 30 members from 24 countries. More information about ELPA can be found at www.elpa-info.org

About Hepatitis C:

Hepatitis C is a virus that attacks the liver. Liver damage typically occurs slowly over 20-30 years and can lead to liver scarring and potentially, to liver cancer or liver failure. It often remains symptomless for many years. The main symptoms if experienced, are fatigue, pain in the liver area, digestive problems and flu-like symptoms. The presence or absence of symptoms is no indication as to how much damage the virus is causing to the liver. This has led hepatitis C to be termed 'The Silent Killer'. More information about Hepatitis C can be found at <http://www.elpa-info.org/about-hepatitis-c.htm>