

Project Name: STEP-C Free (Support to Treatment by Engagement with Peers = Hep C Free)

The Parties: NHS Forth Valley Health Board & Gilead Sciences Ltd

The Term: 12 Months

The Project:

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this project is to micro-eliminate HCV in Forth Valley Health Board by optimizing the current testing, diagnosis and treatment pathway; facilitate more rapid and equitable access to treatment for hard-to-reach patients by:

1. Reducing the time from screening to commencing treatment from over 10 weeks to less than one week
2. Improving patient attrition by reducing the number of steps required from screening to Treatment
3. Moving from DBS testing to point of care screening and testing using Ab Oral screening tests and Cepheid GeneXpert POC HCV RNA tests
4. Expanding a peer support network and increasing capacity of CNS
5. Expanding reach to patients beyond traditional clinical settings

Benefits:

Outcomes for Patients:

- Easier access to testing, significantly reduced waiting time, compared to 8-week DBS result delay
- Immediately placed into shortened pathway once Cepheid result known
- Treatment starts within few days as opposed to 10 weeks
- The new pathway will allow access to test, treat and support for client groups who don't currently engage with standard pathways
- Peer worker will significantly increase support and harm reduction messages to hard to engage groups
- Easier and seamless testing will positively encourage those testing negative to undergo regularly repeat process if further risk activity is identified.

Outcomes for NHS

- Improve access to testing and treatment for hard to reach and marginalised groups, improving health inequalities and reducing burden of long-term chronic disease in disadvantaged populations
- Significantly increase the use of "Treatment for Prevention" strategy in those groups with highest prevalence of Hepatitis C, thus reducing risk of secondary transmission and reinfection
- Will enable NHS Scotland target of Hepatitis C elimination to be reached by 2024-5 within Forth Valley

Outcomes for the Gilead:

- Explore the use of alternative strategies for treatment delivery in a Scottish Health Board setting.
- Involvement in this project is anticipated to further Gilead Sciences Ltd understanding of current and future HCV treatment pathways, including testing modalities, prevention/harm reduction, linkage to care and services – especially for difficult to reach patient.
- This project will allow Gilead a greater insight into where and how to engage with people living with HCV outside of the regular NHS touchpoints. To help Gilead understand what is important to patients with respect to their treatment journey, how they wish to be communicated with and how they may wish to be managed in the future.
- As geographies across the UK and Ireland get close to micro-elimination, the insights and learns from this pilot can support micro-elimination by means of sharing best practice

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