



This is hepatitis...

**NEWS**  
from...

## North America



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### **Institute of Medicine Report Published**

This January, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) released its conclusions from a two-year committee assessment of current prevention and control activities for hepatitis B and C in the US.

The report, Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis Infections in the US, suggests that the current approach to prevention and control of viral hepatitis is not working, and that the diseases are not widely recognized as serious public health problems in the US, even though 5.3 million people are thought to be living with chronic hepatitis B or C. The IOM attribute this lack of awareness to insufficient allocation of resources to viral hepatitis prevention, control, and surveillance programs.

The report suggests that improved surveillance and better integration of viral hepatitis services could remedy the problem, proposing federally-funded health insurance programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. The report proposes incorporating guidelines for risk-factor screening of hepatitis B and C as a required component of preventive care and highlights the concern that healthcare providers and social service providers are currently amongst the groups who lack a firm understanding of these diseases.

### **Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange Expands Hepatitis C Program to Offer Services Nationally**

Early in October, the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) signed a six-month contribution agreement with the Hepatitis C Prevention, Support and Research Unit of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The agreement allows CATIE to expand its hepatitis C program to offer services nationally and take on a

Hepatitis C Knowledge Transfer and Exchange role that is similar to its national role in HIV knowledge exchange.

Hepatitis C services offered by CATIE include ongoing maintenance and expansion of the comprehensive bilingual website [www.hepCinfo.ca](http://www.hepCinfo.ca); the hepatitis C toolkit of print resources that are available through the CATIE Ordering Centre at [www.catie.ca](http://www.catie.ca); and a free and confidential inquiry service that provides hepatitis C information by phone or email in English or French.

### **Planning for World Hepatitis Day is Underway in Canada**

Planning for World Hepatitis Day (WHD) 2010 activities in Canada is well underway. This year, the Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH) is collaborating with the Canadian Liver Foundation, the Canadian Hemophilia Society, the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE), the Hepatitis Outreach Society, Hep C Canada, the Hepatitis C Council of British Columbia, and other national and local organizations to coordinate activities in Canada.

A call for event proposals will be launched this month to encourage groups in every province and territory to organize awareness-raising events on or around May 19. Event organizers will be given access to promotional materials and resources to help them get the word out about WHD and will be sent promotional items such as bracelets, pins and tote bags to distribute at their events.

In Ottawa, a Parliamentary Breakfast will be held on May 13 to mark the day. Joy Smith, MP, Chair of the Standing Committee on Health has graciously agreed to sponsor the breakfast this year and to chair a panel.

A poster competition will also be launched to encourage new and imaginative ways to raise awareness and get people talking about

hepatitis B and C. The winners from each category (youth, adult, and the Correctional Service of Canada) will receive a cash award and will have their poster featured on the WHD Canada micro-site.

**To find out more about WHD activities in Canada, please visit [www.whdcanada.ca](http://www.whdcanada.ca).**

### **The Global Hepatitis C Network – Update**

CSIH is also busy implementing the Global Hepatitis C Network in Canada. The goal of the Network is to contribute to improved population health through increased awareness and understanding in Canada and abroad of issues related to the global hepatitis C epidemic. A Global HCV Working Group comprised of a team of Canadian and international experts is helping to guide Network activities. Within this Working Group, four Task Groups, each with a focus on one of the Networks' key areas (research and surveillance, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment) have been formed. These Task Groups will provide technical advice in the identification of best practice, tools, and resources to be shared through the Network.

Current efforts have centered around planning for a workshop on hepatitis C prevention, called 'Building and Enhancing Capacity for Hepatitis C Prevention.' This workshop, to be held in Ottawa this spring, will focus on hepatitis C prevention services, awareness and education, and communication for specific target populations, including vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations.

The workshop will build and enhance the skills of organizations and individuals involved in hepatitis C prevention work both in Canada and internationally. It will also be a venue for knowledge sharing on best practice and innovative models and tools for hepatitis C prevention being used around the world.

**For more information, or to join the Global Hepatitis C Network in Canada, contact [hcv@csih.org](mailto:hcv@csih.org).**

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