



GPs GAINING CONFIDENCE IN PRESCRIBING FOR HEP C

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01am Monday 23 August 2021

THE broad prescribing authority for direct-acting antivirals for hepatitis C has allowed a large number of general practitioners to take part, increasing GP confidence and improving care for their patients, according to research published today by the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Direct-acting antiviral (DAA) therapy has been available for people with chronic hepatitis C through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) since March 2016, and all clinicians, including GPs, can prescribe.

Authors led by Dr Behzad Hajarizadeh, a Senior Lecturer at the Kirby Institute, analysed PBS data for DAA dispensed to people with chronic hepatitis C during March 2016 – March 2020. Prescribers were categorised into three broad groups: GPs, main specialist groups, and other prescribers.

"During [the study period], 82 694 people with hepatitis C commenced DAA treatment, prescribed by GPs in 36 098 cases (44%), by specialists in 42 585 cases (51%), and by other prescribers in 4011 cases (5%," Hajarizadeh and colleagues wrote.

"Long duration treatment (16–24 weeks), prescribed for patients with more complex disease (eg, cirrhosis, previous failed hepatitis C treatment), was prescribed less frequently by GPs (2188 patients; 6%) than by specialists (5822 patients; 14%).

"A total of 6187 GPs prescribed DAA treatment for at least one patient (18% of 33 556 registered GPs in 2019).

"The number of GPs who prescribed DAA as new prescribers was 1863 in 2017 (83% of new prescribers), 1282 in 2018 (78%), and 943 in 2019 (71%). Almost half the prescribing GPs (48%, 2986 of 6187) and 14% of prescribing specialists (112 of 811) had prescribed DAA therapy for one patient only; 10% of GP prescribers (630 of 6187) and 58% of specialist prescribers (469 of 811) had treated 10 or more patients."

The authors concluded that: "The continuing increase in the number of GPs prescribing DAA and the number treating single patients suggest that GPs are gaining confidence in prescribing DAA therapy.

"This is an important foundation for further enhancing access to treatment."

All MJA media releases are open access and can be found at: <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/media>

Please remember to credit *The MJA*.

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

The statements or opinions that are expressed in the MJA reflect the views of the authors and do not represent the official policy of the AMA or the MJA unless that is so stated.

CONTACTS: Dr Behzad Hajarizadeh
Senior Lecturer
Kirby Institute
UNSW Sydney
Ph: 02 9385 9208
Email: bhajarizadeh@kirby.unsw.edu.au

Lucienne Bamford
Communications Manager
Kirby Institute
Ph: 02 9385 0550
Email: lbamford@kirby.unsw.edu.au