



## **GRANTS AWARDED TO 11 CANADIAN INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE ELIMINATION OF CHRONIC HEPATITIS C INFECTION IN HIGH-RISK POPULATIONS**

*– Elimination of Hepatitis C as a Public Health Threat is Possible –*

**MISSISSAUGA, ON, May 28, 2019** – In support of Canada's commitment to the World Health Organization's (WHO) goal of eliminating hepatitis C (HCV) infection by 2030, Gilead Sciences Canada, Inc. (Gilead Canada) today announced the awarding of HCV Micro-Elimination Grants. The intent of the grants is to support local initiatives across the country to help identify people with chronic HCV and link them to care and treatment. This year, 11 projects have been selected to connect to care some of the most difficult-to-reach high-risk populations for HCV, including people who are: injecting drugs, economically disadvantaged/homeless, co-infected with HIV, immigrants/refugees, formerly incarcerated, and sex workers.<sup>1</sup> Launched in 2018, Gilead Canada has awarded a total of 25 grants to date.

St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team in Toronto is one of this year's grant recipients. Many of the 45,000 patients across its six downtown sites come from diverse backgrounds with an increased risk of HCV, including new immigrants, people living in poverty, those who are homeless, people co-infected with HIV and people struggling with mental health and addictions.

"We realized that about 40 per cent of our patients with HCV had not accessed life-saving treatment, and that was a wake-up call for us. Our goal now is to cure hepatitis C in our practice," said Dr. Tara Kiran, staff physician at St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team. "By educating family doctors to treat patients with HCV, we will be able to cure more patients and contribute to the elimination of the disease."

Dr. Edward Tam, Medical Director, LAIR Centre in Vancouver, and also a 2019 grant recipient, will look to develop a new model of care to support people diagnosed with HCV at the same time that they are being treated for addiction issues. Working with Dr. Jay Wortman, Medical Director, Royal Oak Clinic in Vancouver, the grant will help to identify clinic patients undergoing opiate agonist therapy for addictions who also have HCV, and provide treatment and support in one setting.

"Many prescribers of opiate agonist therapy for people with addiction issues are not familiar with the treatment of HCV, and it is unrealistic to expect that these patients will find their way to a second specialist to access and treat their HCV," said Dr. Tam. "We need to do more to facilitate simultaneous treatment of addictions and HCV at one time and one place. We anticipate that this mandate will prove to be a viable and powerful strategy to advance HCV elimination efforts."

"We recognize that it will take more than just science to eliminate the burden of HCV on patients, our health system and Canadian society as a whole," said Kennet Brysting, General Manager of Gilead Canada. "Together with our grant recipients, we can take collective steps to establish effective HCV micro-elimination strategies and programs right here in Canada that can contribute to the worldwide elimination of HCV. We are already seeing positive results from last year's micro-elimination efforts."

## **2018 Mandate Treats 193 Difficult-to-Reach People in Quebec City Region**

After receiving a grant in 2018, the Coopérative de solidarité SABSA in Quebec City identified vulnerable people with HCV in the region, including people who inject drugs, people with mental health issues, or people who have experienced homelessness. SABSA also provided care to patients, including support to attend medical appointments and needs around housing, nutrition and therapy, to help ensure patient retention and treatment adherence. In total, SABSA surpassed its goals and identified 220 people with HCV and linked 193 people to care.

## **2019 HCV Micro-Elimination Grant Recipients**

Grant recipients were selected based on their ability to demonstrate a plan to deliver new local micro-elimination projects focused on targeted, integrated and locally-based initiatives, in high prevalence areas or settings that increase HCV prevention, screening, diagnosis and linkage to care. The full list of 2019 HCV Micro-Elimination Grant recipients in Canada includes:

Organization: LAIR Centre (Vancouver, BC)  
Project Title: "Eliminate C in OAT" (Opiate Agonist Therapy)  
Primary Patient Population: Addiction/substance use

Organization: Cool Aid Community Health Centre (Victoria, BC)  
Project Title: "INHOME"  
Primary Patient Population: HCV/HIV co-infection

Organization: Community Based Research Centre Society (Vancouver, BC)  
Project Title: "The Feasibility and Acceptability of Online Screening, At-Home Dried Blood Spot Collection, and Peer-Based Linkage to Care for HCV Micro-Elimination in British Columbia"  
Primary Patient Population: HCV/HIV co-infection

Organization: St. Michael's Hospital Academic Family Health Team (Toronto, ON)  
Project Title: "Micro-Elimination of Hepatitis C in a High-Risk Urban Family Health Team by Providing Support for Primary Care Providers to Scale Up Treatment"  
Primary Patient Population: Vulnerable patients within its clinic sites

Organization: Réseau ACCESS Network (Sudbury, ON)  
Project Title: "The Sudbury/Manitoulin Micro-Elimination Project"  
Primary Patient Population: People who inject drugs

Organization: Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (Big Trout Lake, ON)  
Project Title: "The Elimination of Hepatitis C Infection in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation"  
Primary Patient Population: Indigenous

Organization: Dalhousie Healing Support Fund (Toronto, ON)  
Project Title: "Telemedicine Enhanced Expanded Medical Access Partnership: An Innovative Approach to Micro-Elimination"  
Primary Patient Population: Substance use



Organization: Dopamine (Montreal, QC)  
Project Title: "Dopamed and HCV Micro-Elimination"  
Primary Patient Population: People who inject drugs

Organization: Centre L'Envolée de Granby (Shefford, QC)  
Project Title: "Micro-Elimination of Hepatitis C Among the Incarcerated/Formerly Incarcerated"  
Primary Patient Population: Prisoners

Organization: Street Pact Inc./Pacte de Rue Inc. (Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, QC)  
Project Title: "Street Doctor and Community Care Project"  
Primary Patient Population: People who inject drugs

Organization: CAPAHC – Hepatitis C Multipurpose Assisted Clinic (Montreal, QC)  
Project Title: "HCV Screening in the Pakistani Community in Montreal"  
Primary Patient Population: Immigrant

### **About HCV Micro-Elimination**

Micro-elimination is a concept that involves eliminating HCV within defined segments of the population in order to incrementally achieve national elimination. Micro-elimination is a pragmatic way to establish realistic elimination goals, allocate resources and support local expertise to tailor, deliver and scale up interventions. Segments of the population that can be targeted for micro-elimination can include people in certain settings, geographic areas, subpopulations and age cohorts, for example people in prisons, or people living with co-infections such as HIV.<sup>2</sup>

### **About HCV in Canada**

In Canada, it is estimated that 290,000 Canadians are living with chronic HCV and thousands of new cases are diagnosed each year.<sup>3</sup> Around 44 per cent of people living with chronic HCV infection are unaware of their status.<sup>4</sup> There are six genotypes of HCV. Left untreated, HCV can progress into a serious medical condition that may result in cirrhosis, cancer and other life-threatening complications. Populations at increased risk of HCV infection include: people who inject drugs, Baby Boomers born between 1945-1975, recipients of infected blood products or invasive procedures in healthcare facilities with inadequate infection control practices, people with sexual partners who are infected with HCV, people with HIV infection, prisoners or previously incarcerated persons, and people who have had tattoos or piercings.<sup>5</sup>

### **About Gilead Sciences**

Gilead Sciences, Inc. is a biopharmaceutical company that discovers, develops and commercializes innovative therapeutics in areas of unmet medical need. The company's mission is to advance the care of patients suffering from life-threatening diseases. Gilead has operations in more than 35 countries worldwide, with headquarters in Foster City, California. Gilead Sciences Canada, Inc. is the Canadian affiliate of Gilead Sciences, Inc., and was established in Mississauga, Ontario, in 2006.



*For more information on Gilead Sciences, please visit the company's website at [www.gilead.com](http://www.gilead.com), follow Gilead on Twitter (@GileadSciences) or call Gilead Public Affairs at 1-800-GILEAD-5 or 1-650-574-3000.*

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1. World Health Organization. Hepatitis C Fact Sheet. Updated October 2017.
2. CATIE: <https://www.catie.ca/en/pif/spring-2019/micro-elimination-hepatitis-c-pathway-achieve-national-elimination-goals>
3. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. IHME Hepatitis Facts. IHME. Accessed August 3, 2018.
4. Public Health Agency of Canada. Report on Hepatitis B and C in Canada: 2014.
5. World Health Organization. Hepatitis C Fact Sheet. Updated October 2017.