

Hepatitis C in Australia

- Earliest evidence of hepatitis C can be found in stored samples of blood taken from people admitted to Fairfield hospital in Victoria in 1971. All had presented at the hospital with acute hepatitis and all had previously injected illicit drugs.
- Hepatitis C is the second most frequently reported infectious disease to the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System
- In Australia to the end of 2005, over 225,000 diagnoses of hepatitis C virus (HCV) were reported to State and Territory surveillance systems.
- An estimated 264,000 people were living with hepatitis C antibodies in Australia in 2005 of whom 197,000 were estimated to be living with chronic hepatitis infection.
- Of annual total notifications to the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System between 1991 and 2000, around 65% of diagnoses were in the age range 20-39, with approximately 35% of all diagnoses in women.
- Of all people living with hepatitis C antibodies 82.3% were estimated to have been exposed through unsafe injecting drug use practices.
- Hepatitis C is now the most common reason for liver transplantation.
- About every thirty minutes, somebody in Australia is infected with hepatitis C.
- The transmission of hepatitis C is reduced by the provision of Needle and Syringe Programs, peer education and the work of drug user organisations.

References;

- 1) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2004
- 2) National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research Annual Surveillance Report, 2006. HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia
- 3) Ministerial Advisory Committee on AIDS, Sexual Health and Hepatitis, Hepatitis C Sub-Committee Hepatitis C Virus Projections Working Group: Estimates and Projections of the Hepatitis C Virus Epidemic in Australia 2006, October 2006