

Simple Drug Treatment Cures Most Hepatitis C Infected Patients

Last month, a clinical trial published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that once-daily sofosbuvir-velpatasvir for 12 weeks provided high rates of sustained virologic response among both previously treated and untreated patients infected with HCV genotype 1, 2, 4, 5, or 6, including those with compensated cirrhosis.

Dr. Jordan Feld, the lead author, said the combination of sofosbuvir-velpatasvir has been shown to work on all strains of hepatitis C virus, effectively eliminating the need for genotype testing, which has often delayed treatment. The drug combination was investigated in a randomized, placebo-controlled trial at 81 sites in eight different countries. After 12 weeks, 99 per cent of the 624 patients given sofosbuvir-velpatasvir were virus-free three months after completing treatment. None of the 116 patients receiving a placebo had the same result.

"This is truly a one-size-fits-all treatment that is very easy to administer and extremely well-tolerated," said Feld. "Our challenge now is getting treatment to those who need it. Over half of people living with hepatitis C remain undiagnosed."

"Knowing which treatment to use for which patient required expertise, which made it much more difficult for non-specialists to treat hepatitis C," Feld said in an email to the CBC. "There are simply not enough specialists to treat all of the 250,000 to 400,000 infected Canadians."

With the single tablet that is effective for all strains of the virus, it's hoped that family doctors, internists and nurses will step in to treat hepatitis C, particularly in rural and under-served areas, he said. "We are now on a path where elimination of hepatitis C from Canada actually starts to become a realistic goal."

The Positive Care Clinic in Peterborough, at 1-866-303-2420, will also take self-referrals from patients who may prefer a more multidisciplinary approach to both Hepatitis C and HIV care.

To see the original article, please visit:
www.cbc.ca/news/health/hepatitis-c-fled-1.3322442

Prepare for Increase in Immunizations to Prevent School Suspensions

Starting in January, the Health Unit will begin mailing Immunization Information Notice/Questionnaires to parents/guardians of students that do not have adequate immunization records on file. The Health Unit collects specific immunization and demographic information to maintain an electronic record under the Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA). This Act requires students to be immunized for measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), polio, tetanus, meningococcal disease and chickenpox (for students born in 2010 or later), or have a valid exemption. Parents will receive two notices, 21 days apart followed by an Order for Suspension if the Health Unit has not received the requested information. Parents/guardians of students who receive these letters may contact you to arrange for immunization. These letters will be mailed out starting in January 2016.

1. Be prepared. Have extra stock of vaccines required for school-aged students available.
2. Ask parents to bring the letter with them. The letters will specify which vaccines the Health Unit requires information on for the student, as well as a record of the ISPA vaccines that the Health Unit currently has on file.
3. Be aware of additional requirements. This is the first year the suspension process includes vaccines for meningococcal disease, pertussis and varicella (for those born in 2010 or later).
4. Choose the right meningococcal disease vaccine. Students who require meningococcal disease immunization will require either Men-C-C (Menjugate) or Men-C-ACYW135 (Menactra) depending on their age. Menactra is available to order from the Health Unit for students who are 12 years and older who missed immunization in the school based clinics in grade 7.

If you have any questions regarding this process, please contact the Vaccine Preventable Disease Program at 705-743-1000, ext. 139

In this issue...

Public Health Risk of Consuming Raw Milk

Changes to Public Dental Programs

E-cigarette Regulations Take Effect January 1, 2016

Acute Flaccide Paralysis Surveillance and Polio

Poliomyelitis is a highly infectious disease caused by the human enterovirus poliovirus. Less than 1% of cases will develop acute flaccid paralysis but by the time a paralytic case is reported to public health, many more individuals can become infected. Therefore, a single case is considered a public health emergency. Although Canada was declared polio-free in 1994, continued surveillance is essential to protect nonimmunizing populations. From 2004 to 2012, there were four reported cases in infants with a history of recent travel who had been immunized with live polio vaccine in their country of origin. More recently, there has been concern that another circulating strain of enterovirus, D68, may be causative in polio-like neurological symptoms.

What to do if your pediatric patient presents with flaccid paralysis?

1. Report the case to public health by calling 705-743-1000.
2. Collect and submit one stool sample to the National Microbiology Laboratory for poliovirus testing within 14 days of paralysis onset. (We can assist with that.)
3. Examine the child again 60 days after onset to document any residual symptoms.

Public Health Risk of Consuming Raw Milk

There have been recent activities relating to the enforcement of legislation prohibiting the sale and distribution of raw (unpasteurized) milk under the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) and the Milk Act (MA).

Raw milk may contain harmful bacteria such as Salmonella, E. coli and Listeria that can cause serious illness or death. Symptoms associated with these illnesses include severe diarrhea, fever, vomiting and dehydration. They can also lead to life-threatening kidney failure, meningitis, miscarriages or death.

The public health risk of consuming contaminated raw milk is particularly important for young children who may experience more severe effects. A recent summary from Public Health Ontario indicated that between January 1, 2011 through June 30, 2015 there were 526 confirmed cases associated with consumption of unpasteurized milk or milk products. It is important to note that the "under 5" age-group accounted for 32% (167 out of 526 confirmed cases) in Ontario. Please also note that the number of confirmed cases is under-reported and is based only on cases of reportable disease that have been diagnosed by physicians with confirmation by lab tests.

This public health risk is recognized nationally since it is illegal to sell, offer to sell, deliver or distribute milk and milk products that have not been pasteurized in any province and it is also prohibited under the federal Food and Drugs Act. Despite provincial and federal legislation that prohibits raw milk sale and distribution, confirmed cases of illness continue to occur.

Pasteurization does not affect the quality of nutrients present in milk such as calcium, protein and riboflavin. While some people believe that raw milk offers greater nutritional value than pasteurized milk, research indicates there is no significant difference but there is overwhelming evidence that drinking raw milk can make you sick.

If you have any questions, please call Public Health Inspectors at 705-743-1000.

PCCHU Open For Business Downtown at Jackson Square!



The Health Unit is pleased to announce that it has moved downtown to Jackson Square at 185 King St.

This new location brings staff, clinics, programs, and services together under one roof and close by our downtown Community Dental Health Centre at Peterborough Square. Phone numbers and fax lines remain the same, and the following clinics and services can now be found at the new location:

1st Floor - Sexual Health Clinic, Routine Immunization Clinic, Travel Health Clinic

2nd Floor - Prenatal Classes

3rd Floor - Vaccine records and information consultation, Health Hazards Complaints & Inquiries

Call for Location - Nutrition workshops, Quitting smoking session

Vaccine pick-up is available on the third floor in the 'Client Services' area. The elevator can be used to go to the third floor. For vaccine pick up during regular office hours of 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., one hour free parking is available in the King Street garage across the street. For those who need it, wheel chair accessible parking spaces are available just west of the building.

Check our website www.pcchu.ca for more details or call us at 705-743-1000.

GREAT NEWS! Changes to Public Dental Programs in Ontario

Starting January 1, 2016 six publicly funded dental programs will be integrated into the new Healthy Smiles Ontario Program. The new program will be 100% provincially funded through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

1. Which benefits and programs are being integrated?

- Ontario Works (OW);
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);
- Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD);
- Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO);
- Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) and
- Preventive services within the Ontario Public Health Standards, 2008.

2. Dental services at no-cost to your patients!

The new program will provide routine, preventive, and emergency and essential treatment services to eligible children.

3. How can your patients access the new Healthy Smiles Ontario Program?

Children aged 0-17 who are Ontario residents and who meet one of the following income tests will be eligible:

- Member of a social assistance benefit family (OW, ODSP, or ACSD); or
- Member of a family whose previous year's income is at or below the threshold which provides 90% of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) as indicated at www.ontario.ca/healthysmiles

Having dental insurance will not automatically deem a child ineligible for the program.

Children or youth with an urgent dental condition can also access treatment if they meet clinical and financial hardship criteria.

4. How do families apply for the new Healthy Smiles Ontario Program?

Children and/or youth in receipt of social assistance, and children and/or youth who are enrolled in the current Healthy Smiles Ontario and CINOT Programs, will automatically be enrolled.

All other low-income families can apply online or by mail and will have their eligibility assessed and verified based on their family income as reported to the Canada Revenue Agency.

Please refer patients to www.ontario.ca/healthysmiles for more information, or they can contact the ServiceOntario INFOLine toll free at 1-844-296-6306.

New Regulations for Electronic Cigarettes Take Effect January 1, 2016

Electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes or vapes, are products that have emerged in recent years in Canada. A wide range of individuals use e-cigarettes, including: youth; those who use them in their efforts to quit or reduce tobacco-use; and those who use them in places where smoking of tobacco is prohibited. The health consequences of exposure to the vapour from e-cigarettes is not well understood at this time, and until now, they have been unregulated.

Beginning January 1, 2016 in Ontario, new regulations related to e-cigarettes will be implemented in Ontario under the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015. The Act will regulate the sale and use of electronic cigarettes. The Act takes a precautionary and preventative approach through regulation to protect children and youth, reduce tobacco use, and prevent chronic diseases.

The Act's regulations will:

- prohibit the use of e-cigarettes in certain places where the smoking of tobacco is prohibited;
 - ♦ This includes enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places and any other non-smoking areas. This also includes school grounds, play grounds and sporting areas.
 - ♦ Affected proprietors and employers will be provided with indoor signage for use beginning January 1, 2016. Outdoor signs will be provided in the spring 2016.
- prohibit the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19; and
- prohibit the sale of e-cigarettes in certain places where the sale of tobacco is prohibited.

The new law will be enforced by the Peterborough County-City Health Unit. For more information, or to make a complaint, go to www.pcchu.ca or call a Tobacco Enforcement Officer at the Peterborough County-City Health Unit at 705-743-1000.

Thank you. Your ongoing and continued support for supporting a tobacco-free community is much appreciated.

Health Training For HCPs

Take Action on Radon

Awareness. Next to smoking, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer and is linked to causing the deaths of 3,200 Canadians every year. All homes have some level of radon and talking to your patients about the need to test their homes is an important part of preventing radon-related cancer.



Your patients may ask you about the health risks of radon, and the need to test their homes. This module provides you with some information you can use to better answer their questions. Learn more with this free, one-hour, accredited course.

<http://machealth.ca/programs/radon/>

Resources For Patients

Choose to be ...Smoke Free, is a FREE tobacco cessation support program for anyone 16 to 45 years old, that combines behavioural counselling and access to free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), made possible with funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Appointments are available at the Health Unit until March 31, 2016 on:

- Mondays from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; and
- Thursdays from 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

The Choose to be ...Smoke Free support group is also available for women. The next group starts Wednesday, January 6, 2016 from 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at Partners in Pregnancy Clinic. Help with transportation and childcare, and a \$10 gift card will be provided for each session, as well as cost-free NRT for women who find it difficult to quit smoking using non-pharmacological methods.

Promotional posters "Thinking of Making a Change" are enclosed to inform your clients about the program.

Clients can register by calling 705-743-1000, ext. 330.

Health Events For Patients

NEW!

Weekend Prenatal Classes: Coming in 2016!

Due to the popularity of prenatal classes and requests from the public for a weekend option, the Health Unit will pilot four weekend series starting in 2016. A weekend series will consist of two consecutive Saturdays with classes running from 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. The class content will be the same as the comprehensive five night weekday series. They will take place at the Health Unit's new location at 185 King St. in downtown Peterborough.

Although attending prenatal classes is a rite of passage for many, a 2014 Ontario survey found that approximately one-quarter of parents who didn't take prenatal classes wish they had. When asked why, the top reasons cited for not participating was the belief that the information could be accessed through other sources, and a general lack of awareness.

Parents report that classes increase their competency and their capacity to birth and to care for their new baby by reducing fear and anxiety. Recommendations from a healthcare provider and the desire to meet other future parents in a group setting motivate many to sign up.



To ensure your families receive the benefits of prenatal education, please encourage them to connect with the Health Unit by phone or online at www.pcchu.ca | [My Life & Health](#) | [Adults](#) | [Pregnant in Peterborough](#). If group education isn't their preferred method of learning, a Public Health Nurse is happy to explore other options and to help develop a customized learning plan to meet their needs for birth and beyond.

More ways to stay informed!

Protect yourself with the right health information. Follow PCCHU on Twitter at www.twitter.com/PCCHU, see us on Facebook at www.facebook.ca/PCCHU1.

