



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Clinicians respond to hepatitis B crisis**

A group of leading Australian doctors and health and prevention experts have joined together to help curb the impact of hepatitis B, coinciding with the launch of World Hepatitis Day and the Hepatitis Awareness Week.

The National Hepatitis B Alliance will provide a forum for these experts to exchange ideas, lobby government and allow practitioners and researchers working in viral hepatitis to focus on the specific needs of patients.

“This is largely an overlooked condition which impacts greatly on the lives of many Australians. We now need to work with GP’s to improve the outcomes for chronic hepatitis B patients,” said Professor Darrell Crawford, President of the Gastroenterological Society of Australia.

“People with chronic hepatitis B infection incur a high burden of chronic disease and around 30% of these people will die prematurely of liver cancer or other liver disease,” said Dr Andrew Penman, Chief Executive Officer of the Cancer Council NSW. “We can respond to this challenge more effectively by applying all our knowledge and resources in a coordinated public health strategy.”

The Alliance seeks Commonwealth Government support on issues such as making viral load testing available to patients living with hepatitis B. This test, which helps assess risk of liver cancer is not reimbursed by Medicare and is therefore costly to patients, hindering the selection of appropriate treatment.

Another of the Alliance’s key goals is to create tools for GPs, clinicians and other health practitioners to monitor the health of chronic hepatitis B patients, allowing timely identification of cancer and liver disease and appropriate treatment.

“There is now good evidence to suggest the earlier we diagnose and treat hepatitis B carriers the less likely it will develop into liver cancer, due to more effective antiviral therapy,” said Professor Sharon Lewin, Director Infectious Diseases Unit, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne.

The Cancer Council NSW and the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) have recently developed a hepatitis B online resource that focuses on the role that general practitioners can play in patient management. The aim is to ensure that this resource is on the desk of every Australian doctor should Government funding be obtained.

To view this resource or find out more information about the alliance go to [www.alliance.hepatitis.org.au](http://www.alliance.hepatitis.org.au)

**The National Hepatitis B Alliance executive comprises of:**

Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM)  
The Cancer Council NSW  
Gastroenterological Society of Australia  
Hepatitis Australia  
Australian Council of Chinese Medical Association

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**ALLIANCE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**