

25 July 2019

Get treated and cured on World Hepatitis Day

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) is encouraging people living with hepatitis C in the community to take advantage of new highly effective cures, as part of Hepatitis Awareness Week.

NSW is moving closer to eliminating hepatitis C with research showing more than 22,000 people across the state have been cured of the virus, using new easy-to-take treatments.

ISLHD Program Manager, Michael Fernandez, has urged anyone in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven who believes they may be living with hepatitis C to get tested and treated.

“These new medications are very effective, with a cure rate of 95 per cent,” Mr Fernandez said.

“The treatments can be prescribed by any GP and can cure the virus within eight to 12 weeks. They also have minimal or no side-effects.”

Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant said NSW is moving toward the elimination of hepatitis C.

“We’re aiming to eliminate hepatitis C within the next 10 years,” Dr Chant said.

“Thanks to groundbreaking medications, the elimination of hepatitis C is now an achievable goal.

Around 29 per cent of people estimated to be living with hepatitis C in NSW or 23,652 people, have now been treated. About 58,000 people across the state are yet to seek treatment.

For each patient cured, the NSW healthcare savings are \$1,612 per year. This equates to \$82 million in savings and more than 22,000 patients cured since the new treatments became available in 2016.

Hepatitis NSW CEO, Stuart Loveday, said the new oral pill treatments are revolutionary compared to the previous combination pill and injection treatments which took longer, had more side-effects and lower cure rates.

“It’s so important that people see their GP to get treated if they think they might have hepatitis C. Initially, there are almost no symptoms but if left untreated, hepatitis C can ultimately result in significant liver disease,” Mr Loveday said.

World Hepatitis Day is on 28 July. For more information on testing, treatment, and prevention for hepatitis C call the Hepatitis Infoline on 1800 803 900 or visit hepc.org.au.

Editor’s note: Michael Fernandez is available on Friday 26 July for media interviews.

Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District

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