



IRISH HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY LTD

Cumann Haemifile Na hEireann

PRESS RELEASE

STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 7AM 22ND DECEMBER 2016

Issued by the Irish Haemophilia Society.

Irish Haemophilia Society announces the effective eradication of Hepatitis C in people with haemophilia in Ireland.

The Irish Haemophilia Society has today announced the effective eradication of Hepatitis C in people with haemophilia in Ireland. All people with haemophilia who required treatment for Hepatitis C have now been offered treatment, with excellent success rates.

Background

From the 1970's to 1991, a total of 240 people with haemophilia were infected with Hepatitis C by blood products, used for the treatment of haemophilia. Of these individuals 105 were also infected with HIV. To date, 112 people have died of either HIV or Hepatitis C.

"This was the largest medical disaster in the history of the State and it devastated the entire haemophilia community", stated Brian O'Mahony, Chief Executive of the Irish Haemophilia Society. This disaster led to the establishment of the Lindsay Tribunal of Inquiry in 2001.

People with haemophilia who were infected with Hepatitis C were strongly supported by the Society, as they sought and underwent treatment over the past number of years. Treatment uptake among people with haemophilia was strong, despite the harsh side effects and long duration of previous treatments.

By 2015, all but 37 people had successfully cleared the virus through treatment. The availability of the new generation of direct acting antivirals in 2015 provided an opportunity for successfully treating the virus with a less harsh regime and a much shorter duration of treatment.

The Society advocated strongly for the availability of these treatments for people with haemophilia and in July 2015, it received an assurance from the Department of Health that all State infected patients, including people with haemophilia, would be treated no later than the end of 2017.

That target has now been exceeded. All people with haemophilia have now been offered treatment. The majority have now completed treatment with a small number currently undergoing treatment. The success rates to date have been in excess of 90%. For those who have cleared this virus, their future risk of serious liver disease or liver cancer has been very significantly reduced.

Executive Board

Traci Marshall-Dowling (Chairperson), John Stack (Vice-Chairperson), Gerard O'Reilly (Treasurer), Barbara Wynne (Secretary), David Curtin, Michael Davenport, Mary-Clare Delaney, Seamus McDonald, Jim O'Leary. **Chief Executive** – Brian O'Mahony. **Administrator** – Debbie Greene.

Registration

Company Registered No. 142834
Registered Charity No. 9214

Mr O'Mahony stated: "The effective eradication of this virus, which has brought so much death and despair to our community, is a milestone in the history of haemophilia in Ireland. We are grateful to the Department of Health, the HSE and the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme who have facilitated this achievement. We are also grateful to the excellent Hepatologists, infectious disease specialists and nurses who supervised the treatment".

"The National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme welcomes this significant announcement. The Irish Haemophilia Society continues to provide invaluable support to the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme and the HSE's long term goal of making Hepatitis C a rare disease in Ireland by 2030 by providing treatment to all persons infected with the virus." Stated Prof. Suzanne Norris, Chair of the National Hepatitis C Treatment Programme.

Ends

For further information, contact Brian O'Mahony, Chief Executive, Irish Haemophilia Society.

Email: brian@haemophilia.ie Tel: 01-6579900/087-2515325