



Hepatitis C Caring Ambassadors Program Newsletter

November 2007

IN THE NEWS

Innogenetics Concludes Settlement and Licensing Agreement in the Field of Hepatitis C Diagnostics

<http://www.pharmalive.com/News/index.cfm?articleid=485283&categoryid=54>

“Innogenetics announced today an agreement with Novartis on major licensing terms in the field of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) diagnostics. According to the license agreement, Novartis grants Innogenetics a license to its Hepatitis C patent rights in the field of HCV immunodiagnostics in certain territories. In parallel, a settlement agreement was reached thereby terminating the ongoing patent litigation between the parties. The agreements maintain Innogenetics commercial rights in those territories where it has a business interest.”

Westbrook Warm to Needle Exchange:

A program based in Portland [Maine] wants to expand to Westbrook, where many of its clients live.

<http://pressherald.maintoday.com/story.php?id=141148&ac=PHnws>

“Needle exchanges have been criticized by people who believe such programs condone and even increase drug use. Operators of a needle-exchange program in Portland are looking to open a satellite operation in Westbrook. While the program for injection drug users is operated by Portland's Public Health Division, it is a regional resource funded by state money and foundation grants. A survey of clients revealed that many live in Westbrook, though the exact number was not available on Tuesday. “

Scientists Discover Better Treatment for Hepatitis C

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/418565/scientists_discover_better_treatment.html

“Biologists at the University of California San Diego have announced the discovery of a completely new mechanism that mammalian cells use in their fight against Hepatitis C virus infections, which can lead to cirrhosis of the liver or liver cancer. This is a widespread problem, affecting about 2.7 million Americans and 170 million world wide. They believe that this discovery could be the answer to improving the current antiviral treatments or could even lead to new treatments that will be more effective and have fewer side effects.”

ACG: Gene Expression Predicts Sustained Response in Chronic Hepatitis C

<http://www.medpagetoday.com/MeetingCoverage/ACG/tb/7032>

“A panel of gene expression biomarkers can identify patients with chronic hepatitis C genotype 1 who are likely to achieve sustained virologic response to interferon-based therapy, results of a study reported here suggest. Action Points Explain to interested patients that genetic testing might help identify patients with the most common type of hepatitis C infection who are likely to respond to treatment.”

Initial Results of Phase II Study with HCV Protease Inhibitor Boceprevir in Treatment-Naive Hepatitis C Patients Show a High Rate of Early Virologic Response

<http://money.cnn.com/news/newsfeeds/articles/prnewswire/NYTH03218102007-1.htm>

“Schering-Plough Corporation today provided an update on the clinical development program for boceprevir, its investigational oral hepatitis C protease inhibitor. Initial results from an ongoing Phase II study in treatment-naive (previously untreated) hepatitis C patients showed boceprevir (800 mg TID) in combination with PEGINTRON(TM) (peginterferon alfa-2b) and REBETOL(R) (ribavirin, USP) achieved a high rate of early virologic response, with up to 79 percent of patients having undetectable virus (HCV-RNA) at week 12 of boceprevir treatment compared to 34 percent of patients receiving PEGINTRON and REBETOL alone.”

Discovery of New Antiviral Mechanism in Mammals May Improve Treatment of Hepatitis C Infections

<http://www.physorg.com/news111855550.html>

“A team of researchers led by biologists at the University of California, San Diego has discovered a completely new mechanism that mammalian cells employ to fight infections of the Hepatitis C virus, which affects approximately 2.7 million Americans and 170 million people worldwide. The achievement, detailed in a paper published in the October 18 issue of the journal Nature, could improve current antiviral regimens or result in new treatments that are more effective and possess fewer detrimental side effects for those with the Hepatitis C virus infection, which frequently leads to liver cirrhosis and/or liver cancer. “

[United Kingdom] ACTION is Being Taken to Combat the Rising Number of Hepatitis C Infections in Herefordshire

http://www.herefordtimes.com/mostpopular.var.1765749.mostviewed.advice_about_hepatitis_c.php

“Herefordshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership is raising awareness across the county and encouraging people to find out if they have contracted the virus. The organisation joined the Drugs Advisory Service Herefordshire (DASH) on Monday and set up a stand in High Town to give information and advice to the public as part of a countywide campaign which also provides information to all Herefordshire GPs, pharmacies and community centres.”

Cubist Gets Option to Acquire Illumigen

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/business/technology/2003955488_illumigen17.html

“In what could become a lucrative deal for some local biotech investors, Cubist Pharmaceuticals bought an exclusive option to acquire Illumigen Biosciences, a Seattle firm working on a product to treat hepatitis C infections. Cubist will pay \$4.7 million for the option and \$1 million to help further the therapy's development. If the pharmaceutical, based in Lexington, Mass., decides to buy closely held Illumigen, it will pay shareholders \$9 million and up to \$75.5 million in milestone payments related to the progress of the hepatitis treatment.”

Hepatitis C: A Challenge to Physicians

The disease is often asymptomatic, there's no vaccine and it kills 8,000 to 10,000 people a year

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071017/NEWS/710170330>

“A disease that afflicts as many as 4 million Americans is the most common cause of chronic liver disease, but it produces no symptoms in about 80 percent of its victims. People who have liver failure associated with hepatitis C account for about half of the liver transplants performed every year in the United States, Dr. Aijaz Ahmed said during a presentation Tuesday at the Smullin Center at Rogue Valley Medical Center. The disease also kills 8,000 to 10,000 Americans annually.”

Japan Probes Failure to Notify Patients at Risk of Hepatitis C from Tainted Blood

<http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=8011119>

“The Japanese government is investigating why more than 400 people exposed to hepatitis C-tainted blood products at least 5 years ago were never informed, officials said Tuesday. Drug maker Mitsubishi Pharma Corp. provided the Health Ministry with documents in 2002 on 418 patients exposed to the virus due to use of its tainted blood products, said Kumiko Saika, spokeswoman for the company, which earlier this year became Mitsubishi Tanabe Pharma Corp.”

Hepatitis C Testing Recommended For Anyone With A Tattoo

<http://www.emaxhealth.com/68/17280.html>

“The connection between tattoos and hepatitis C virus (HCV) has long been suspected but never completely substantiated. Tattoos and the connection to the disease were clouded by a perceived propensity to other risk factors, such as injection drug use. “Other studies did not exclude patients with other risk factors for hepatitis C,” explains principal investigator Dr. Edmund Bini, “which made it difficult to assess the association between HCV and tattoos. The strength of that association surprised us.””

[Australia] Hep C Infection After Test Missed

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/hep-c-infection-after-test-missed/2007/10/22/1192940991633.html>

“A patient has contracted Hepatitis C from an organ transplant after a test that would have detected the disease was not performed until after the operation. The nucleic acid test (NAT) was not done before the transplant because it was not available after hours. Had the test been done before the operation, the patient would not have had the transplant and would not have contracted Hepatitis C, a spokeswoman for NSW Health has admitted.”

The Basics: The Asterisk on Cancer Deaths

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/21/weekinreview/21basicB.html?_r=1&ref=health&oref=slogin

“There was good news about cancer last week, a report that death rates in the United States have begun falling by 2.1 percent a year, nearly twice the rate of previous declines. But the same report, by the American Cancer Society and other groups, also said certain cancers seem to be becoming more common — not hugely so, but noticeable. Among those increasing in men and women are myeloma and cancers of the thyroid and kidney. In women, melanoma and cancers of the bladder have increased; in men so have cancers of the liver and esophagus.”

Watchdog Blood Database Set Up

<http://www.imt.ie/displayarticle.asp?AID=14016&NS=1&SID=1&CAT=18>

“A database has been established to gather information on an ongoing basis from patients who are infected by hepatitis C through blood or blood products in Ireland. A database has been established to gather information on an ongoing basis from patients who are infected by hepatitis C through blood or blood products in Ireland.”

[EU] Experts Caution Against Hidden Hepatitis C Spread

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS&ACTION=D&SESSION=&RCN=28454

“The Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN; formerly the Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network - CEEHRN) has warned of a hidden hepatitis C epidemic. Only between 10% and 40% of European hepatitis C virus (HCV) carriers know about their infection, according to an EHRN report published on 1 October, World Hepatitis Awareness Day (WHAD).”

[Tasmania] Tassie Turns Blind Eye to Hep C

<http://www.news.com.au/mercury/story/0,22884,22523567-3462,00.html>

“A national poll shows Tasmanians are dangerously ignorant about hepatitis C, says the Tasmanian Council on AIDS, Hepatitis and Related Diseases. TasCAHRD said the State Government continued to bury its head in the sand, with no funding for an agreed program on the virus. “The results of this poll demonstrate a disturbing lack of hepatitis awareness in our community,” said TasCAHRD chief executive officer Kevin Marriott. “More than 3400 Tasmanians have been exposed to the virus yet we continue to be ignorant about simple things like how the virus is transmitted, how it affects the body and treatment options.””

Vertex Hep C Drug Shows Real Promise, Limitations

<http://www.reuters.com/article/healthNews/idUSTON17414820071001>

“A closely watched hepatitis C drug being developed by Vertex Pharmaceuticals Inc continues to promise improvement over current treatments, according to analysts who have viewed brief summaries of data from highly anticipated clinical trials. The summaries, known as abstracts, of data to be presented in full next month at the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases annual meeting also suggest some limitations and side effects from the drug, telaprevir, analysts said. “The incremental information provided by Vertex and the (study’s) investigators continues to suggest that telaprevir will deliver a sustained virological response (SVR) of 70 percent, or thereabouts, in real world efficacy,” Geoff Porges, an analyst with Sanford Bernstein, wrote in a research note.”

New Therapeutic Vaccine May Offer Hope for Chronic Hepatitis C Patients

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/399182/new_therapeutic_vaccine_may_offer_hope.html

“According to a press release, everything is ready and set to test a new vaccine that may offer hope for people who suffer from Hepatitis C and have relapsed after standard treatment. Standard treatment consists of treatment with Ribavirin and Pegylated-Interferon Alpha for about six months. Some patients may fail at this standard treatment and may have a relapse in the disease. Additionally, and according to the press release, standard treatment is effective in 50% of the patients completing therapy, is lengthy and often poorly tolerated.”

Hepatitis C Testing in Nottingham Marks World Hepatitis Awareness Day

<http://www.bjhcim.co.uk/news/2007/n710001.htm>

“For the first time in the UK today, members of the public will be able to drop in and get a test for hepatitis C in a local branch of Boots. The project, a unique collaboration between Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, Boots and national patient charity the Hepatitis C Trust, was instigated by the late Dame Anita Roddick, who campaigned to raise awareness of hepatitis C.”

Safe Syringes Could Avert 1.3 million Deaths a Year: WHO

http://ca.today.reuters.com/news/newsArticle.aspx?type=topNews&storyID=2007-10-23T082155Z_01_L2355082_RTRIDST_0_NEWS-INJECTIONS-COL.XML

“Safer syringes could avert 1.3 million deaths a year, especially in poorer countries where 40 percent of all injections involve unsterilized reused needles, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Tuesday. In a statement, the U.N. agency linked 33 percent of new hepatitis B infections and 2 million new cases of hepatitis C each year to unsafe injections and needle-stick injuries by health workers.”

CLINICAL TRIALS, COHORT STUDIES, AND PILOT STUDIES

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