

**Ministry of Health  
and Long-Term Care**

**Chief Medical Officer of Health and  
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**Ministère de la Santé et  
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**Help raise awareness about hepatitis C**

In Ontario, there are presently between 105,000-132,000 people who have been infected with hepatitis C. Researchers estimate that about 30,000 of these people do not know they are infected. The Ontario government wants to increase awareness about hepatitis C for two reasons – so that people who are at risk of having the disease will get tested and seek treatment where necessary, and so that people will learn how to decrease their risk of contracting and transmitting hepatitis C.

I have enclosed a physician guide that contains information on assessing patients for risk factors associated with hepatitis C. I have also enclosed general information about hepatitis C and ask that you distribute the fact sheet and display the posters within your office. We hope that the information provided is helpful. People may also call the ministry INFOLine at 1-877-234-4343 (TTY 1-800-387-5559) or visit the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website at: [www.health.gov.on.ca/hepc](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/hepc).

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provides specific hepatitis vaccines at no cost to people with chronic liver diseases including hepatitis C carriers. Hepatitis B vaccine has been available since 1998 and hepatitis A vaccine was added to the 'Pre-exposure High Risk Program' in 2003. Physicians can access these vaccines by contacting their local health units.

The relative prevalence of HCV in Ontario is five times that of HIV. We often do not see these patients in the health care system until 20 years after they are infected because many remain asymptomatic. I am asking for your help to educate the public, particularly those who are most at risk for hepatitis C, to bring this epidemic under control.

Thank you in advance for all of your hard work in keeping Ontarians healthy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheela Basrur".

Dr. Sheela Basrur  
Chief Medical Officer of Health and  
Assistant Deputy Minister