



Association of Nurses in Substance Abuse

### Health Technology Appraisal

Interferon alfa and Ribavirin for the treatment of mild chronic hepatitis C-part review of existing guidance no. 75

ANSA – Commentator comments re: Appraisal Consultation Document

I am responding on behalf of ANSA and as a clinical Nurse Specialist in the field of Hepatology. The evaluation report and appraisal consultation document (ACD) were extremely comprehensive. Many of the concerns that colleagues, patients, relatives and service providers that I work and liaise with have been addressed and taken into account by the appraisal committee.

However, as the ANSA representative, we have particular interest in how these preliminary recommendations impact upon people with chronic Hepatitis C who have substance misuse issues. With increasing testing and Hepatitis B vaccination programmes (in accordance with NTA targets) aimed at vulnerable groups, many nurse specialists within drug agencies and Hepatology clinics are seeing more referrals from people with drug & alcohol misuse issues. Many of these would fulfil the criteria of “Mild” CHC. The comments regarding reducing “reservoirs of infection” would be relevant to this patient / client group.

Section 4.3.11 relates to continued IVDU / alcohol consumption. This section remains unclear for practitioners and leads to differences in practice around the country. This is clearly an area for more research and audit (section 5). In particular, many vulnerable patient groups at which testing is being targeted, fail to undertake testing, as they often perceive that they will not get treated if found to have CHC.

Further research should be encouraged particularly as early virological responses for Genotypes 2/3 may enable shortened treatment courses, which would be invaluable for vulnerable groups such as those with drug misuse issues, rough sleepers, prisoners, sex workers etc. More qualitative research should be encouraged to look at the impact of Multi-disciplinary team working / clinical managed networks that can support these groups of people and aim to reduce rates of further infections (affecting public health issues).

ANSA would like to support the preliminary recommendations of NICE for the treatment of mild chronic Hepatitis C.

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