NICE appraisal of sofosbuvir for treating chronic hepatitis C

Consideration of the case for extending the period before funding needs to be made available for a NICE technology appraisal

Feedback from Liver4Life – 22nd November 2014

While we understand that NHS England may not be able to put in place its plan for HCV Networks, and its 'task and finish' plan, and appears to be concerned that the introduction of Sofosbuvir will make the treatment of HCV more difficult, we would like to disagree.

The development of Sofosbuvir will mean that the treatment of people affected by HCV will be simpler to treat, not more difficult. This will be due to the reduction in side affects, and also the reduction in the treatment period.

From a patient perspective, NHS England's plan to delay the implementation will cause additional stress to individual patients, who have been waiting for this treatment to be released. The treatment of HCV does not just remove the risk of onward transmission and halt the progression of liver disease, but can be a point of change for patients to also change the way they live their lives.

We also feel that the existing clinical structure of the NHS can deliver the treatment without delay. The existing structure currently offers triple therapy to all available patients, and this treatment is more difficult to manage than Sofosbuvir treatment, and therefore we strongly disagree with the proposed delay in making this treatment available.

Finally we feel that this may be about the cost implications to NHS England's 2015 budget, rather than the ability of the NHS to deliver Sofosbuvir safely and effectively. The majority of hepatologists have been waiting for these drugs for many years, and are keen to use them, as the benefits to patients are obvious. We believe NHS England is worried about the number of treatments offered in the first year, rather than the impact it will have on patients and their families.