



HCV ADVOCATE

a series of fact sheets written by experts in the field of liver disease

# HCSP FACT SHEET

• HCV TREATMENT – SIDE EFFECT MANAGEMENT •

## HCV Treatment and Depression: For Family and Friends

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### Foreword

Depression is a common side effect of treatment for hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. Watching a loved one experience depression can be frightening. Feeling helpless is a common reaction to someone else's depression. If you are a friend or family member, you are already helping the person you are concerned about by reading this. By gaining information and tools, you can be a great source of power and support.

### What You Can Do

The experience of undergoing HCV treatment is somewhat unique and patients frequently state that the only people who understand them are other HCV patients with treatment experience. Although you may not be able to completely empathize, you can be supportive by showing compassion and patience.

It may be helpful to find support for the depressed person. Encourage him or her to speak to his or her doctor. Appropriate diagnosis and treatment are essential. Treatment for depression may take anywhere from 2 to 8 weeks to be fully effective. You can encourage your friend or family member to stick with it until the medications start to work or to talk to their doctor about alternatives if there is no improvement.

**Important Note:** *Do not ignore remarks of suicide or hurting self or others. These need to be reported immediately to the patient's doctor or other professional. If a suicide attempt is imminent, call 911.*

If there are any HCV support groups available, encourage your loved one to attend. You may offer to drive him or her to the group. If the group is open to everyone, perhaps volunteer to attend it with him or her.

You may want to encourage the depressed person to go for a walk, to the movies, or do other activities that previously gave them pleasure. If you are refused, do not push it. It may be enough to just sit and listen to the radio or watch TV together. Some patients have difficulty reading during treatment, so perhaps listening to an audio book might interest you both.

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The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

This information is provided by the Hepatitis C Support Project a nonprofit organization for HCV education, support and advocacy

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## Depression – For Family & Friends

HCV patients are sometimes irritable during treatment. Try not to take this personally. Keep your expectations to a minimum. Do not expect a depressed HCV patient to “snap out of it” or to be able to turn the mood around by positive thinking. Medication-induced depression is influenced by physical factors and all the willpower in the world will not make it go away.

**Important Note:** *If you feel that you could be physically harmed by the patient, get immediate help. Do not put yourself in harm’s way.*

## **Sexuality**

Patients commonly report decreased sexual interest during treatment. Some antidepressant medications can also cause some sexual problems as well as decreased libido. This will return to normal after HCV and antidepressant medications are stopped. Patients should never stop medications without speaking to their doctors first.

## **Take Care of Yourself**

Make sure you take care of yourself. It is not necessary for you to give up your own needs during this time. If you need to, find someone that you can talk to and will support you. Engage in activities that give you pleasure. If your sex life is affected, try to find ways to give and receive physical affection with your loved one. Remember that HCV treatment is not forever. It will end and so will the side effects.

*Disclaimer: The diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric and other medical disorders requires a trained medical professional. Information contained in this article is intended for educational purposes only. It should NOT be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment of any mental/psychiatric disorders. Please consult a medical professional if the information here leads you to believe you or someone you know may have a psychiatric or other medical illness.*

*Portions of this FactSheet are excerpts written by Lucinda Porter, RN and Eric Dieperink, MD which appeared in Coping with Depression and Hepatitis C published by the Hepatitis C Support Project. Permission to use granted by the authors.*

### *Related publications:*

- **HCV and Mental Health: HCV and Depression**  
[www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets\\_pdf/MH\\_HCV\\_and\\_Depression.pdf](http://www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/MH_HCV_and_Depression.pdf)
- **HCV and Mental Health: Managing Depression**  
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### *For more information*

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Centre for Suicide Prevention (Canada)</b><br/> <a href="http://www.suicideinfo.ca">www.suicideinfo.ca</a></li> <li>• <b>National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)</b><br/> <a href="http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml">www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml</a></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National Suicide Prevention Lifeline</b><br/>                     273-TALK or 1 (800) 273-8255</li> <li>• <b>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)</b><br/> <a href="http://www.samhsa.gov">www.samhsa.gov</a></li> </ul> |
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