

Swiss Patient organisation SHCA (Swiss Hepatitis C Association) offers help and raises awareness across Switzerland in close collaboration with Swiss Experts on viral hepatitis “Hepatitis Schweiz”

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BACKGROUND

As soon as the new DAAs began to be marketed, wealthy Switzerland, like many other countries, decided to limit the treatment of hepatitis C due to the cost of these new drugs.

Some founding members of the SHCA started a petition in 2015 asking for a lift of the so called “Limitatio” who limits access to treatment and deposited the petition in Berne to the Swiss government.

The Swiss Hepatitis C Association (SHCV in German) was then created in 2016 after the Swiss government did not react and continued with the limited access to treatment with the new DAAs to patients only having reached an F3 Fibrosis stadium or cirrhosis, proved by biopsy or another non invasive methods, like Fibroscan®.

Some manager of the Federal Office of Public Health (FOSP) even telling on national TV that Hepatitis C without cirrhosis is not a danger for health, not a real illness.

The members decided to get more active, as a lot of patients contacting us were desperate to get a cure after years of suffering and were refused a therapy because of their fibrosis status not reaching F3. Even with cirrhosis some health insurances refused to pay the high price of the DAAs arguing that the patients were not sick enough, refusing to recognize extra hepatic manifestations.

Awareness still need to be raised, as a lot of GP are not aware of the multiple dangers of Hep C and the necessity to screen and treat the population. 40'000 people in Switzerland still need to be found who are not aware of their illness.

CONCLUSIONS

With our work a first therapy was open to ALL GT1 and GT4 patients without relation to FibroScan® results, and news are encouraging for the fall of the limitation to therapy for the other genotypes.

Much more need to be done in our country to reach the goals of WHO, Hepatitis C is not well know within the population so we will need to focus on these issues :

AWARNESS and TESTING

With the partnership of “Hepatitis Schweiz”, the Swiss Experts on viral hepatitis, we will continue our Awareness and Risk Testing campaign launched on Hepatitis Day 2017.

We will be present in cities across Switzerland to help to find the 40'000 infected persons living in our country to achieve the goal of the WHO for an elimination of hepatitis by 2030.

COUNSELING and INFORMING

We will still be active in counseling and giving information to patients, GP doctors, nurses until this illness is know by the bright public, defeating the stigma hepatitis C has in the society.

METHODS

In 2016 and 2017 we were active in the press, TV, distributed flyers across all Switzerland in hospitals, treatment centres and in the street.

Insurances who refused treatment to patients, even they were within the “Limitatio”, were denounced by us to the Federal Office of Public Health.

We keep discussions on-going with all pharmaceutical companies asking them sometimes for help in hard cases and for a common sense as well to lower their prices.

At the beginning of the limitation of treatment, we got in contact with Dr Freeman and the FixHepC Buyer's Club to find a safe and organized solution for all denied patients. This is nowadays not used that much anymore as the limitation starts to fell.

After 1st July 2017, when a first medication was finally approved to treat all genotype 1 and 4 patients (60% of Swiss patients) without the imposed limits in liver scarring, we focus nowadays on “Awareness and Testing” using World Hepatitis Day for the launch of a awareness campaign to find and treat the approx. 40'000 persons unaware of their infection.

Our flyers in german, french, italian distributed at “awareness action days” across the country with a QR scan leading to the online infection risk test from the group of expert on viral hepatitis “Hepatitis Schweiz” :

50 % of infected persons do not know about their infection

**Are you also NOhep ?
Do you know the risks ?
Get certain about it ! Do the test !**

Help us to eliminate Hepatitis C in Switzerland until 2030...

50% der Infizierten wissen nicht von ihrer Infektion



Bist du auch NOhep?

Kennst du die Risiken?

**Schaff dir Gewissheit!
Mach den Test!**

Helfe mit bis 2030 die Hepatitis C in der Schweiz zu eliminieren ...

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author has no personal connection to the pharmaceutical companies and performs voluntary work at the Swiss Hepatitis C Association.

The Association itself is funded by private donations, memberships. Sponsorship exists from AbbVie, Gilead and MSD for the production of the flyers and for our webpage without marketing of any of their products.

We thank them for their help.

RESULTS

Patient calling us were rising quite quickly after the SHCA was getting known through TV, press and flyers.

The Swiss government forced a few health insurances to pay for the refused treatments or to risk high fines after our intervention. More and more health insurances stopped their systematic refusal.

We managed a few compassionate use for hard cases of therapy refusal through the help of pharmaceutical companies.

We helped a lot of desperate patients to import medication through the Buyers' Club of Dr Freeman in Hobart / AUS, as the Swiss drug authorities Swissmedic decided to allow a 3 months importation of Hepatitis C medicine.

A campaign was started on World Hepatitis Day 2017 trilingual flyers where produced by Hepatitis Schweiz (Swiss Hepatitis Strategy, group of experts) and our own awareness and information flyers will now be distributed through main cities in Switzerland. An **online infection risk test** is proposed, with a free blood test offered if the result of it is positive.

ACTION DAY in Zürich on World Hepatitis Day 2017



Contact Information

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SCHWEIZERISCHE HEPATITIS C VEREINIGUNG