

Hepatitis sufferers may save health board

MANY thanks to the ODT and David Loughrey for publishing my story with information on how to get access to effective medication to cure hepatitis C (ODT, 26.12.15). I have calculated that if 20 or more people in the South get the generic medication — and I am confident they will within the next 12 months — we will save the Southern DHB more than \$16 million. This would be great news, and would give our society a chance to reflect on, and reject, the pervasive stigma that accompanies HCV diagnosis.

The virus is transmitted blood to blood, however it can survive days or weeks on surfaces. People have contracted it via tweezers, razors, earrings, toothbrushes, hot tubs, tattoos; through vaccinations, transfusion, dentistry, or as a workplace accident to a health professional. And yes, through needle use. In all cases it has been contracted accidentally, but because of the unchallenged stigma, we are weighed up over and over in our lives and assigned a place on a scale of sympathy. It is usually not intentional; more a thinking-out-loud process, representing the widespread notion that there is something a bit iffy about hepatitis.

The thing is, those in the wrong place at the wrong time, as above, often suffer the effects of this stigma more acutely than those of us assumed to have knowingly taken a risk. They carry the burden of the virus, and the secret. It is isolating, causes people to delay seeking treatment, form friendships or support networks. It makes us all equally vulnerable when receiving any kind of healthcare. The whole mindset is pretty last century; let's leave it behind.

Hazel Heal
Dunedin

machinations and personal agendas of key people over the past 25 years, only some of whom have resided in the Middle East. I would suggest that US President Bill Clinton, PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli PM Ehud Barak all conspired to produce an outcome in the 1990s that met each of their own political and personal agendas.

Far from a lack of wisdom in the region, the US has continued to muddy the waters in order to achieve its own narrow geopolitical strategy.

Tremain's cartoon perpetuates the myth that the Middle East bears total responsibility for its current state of affairs — and as anyone informed about the region's history will tell you, this is untrue.

Peter J. Hatherley-Greene
United Arab Emirates

Pay rise

IF I was the prime minister or a member of Parliament, I would enjoy the generous salary, but I would feel ashamed to accept a pay rise recently determined by the Remuneration Authority.

The increase is "needed" to keep salaries in line with the private sector. Why? Parliamentarians can choose to work in that sector if they want to earn more. If they leave Parliament, we'll keep the passionate ones who care for people rather than money.

The pay increase could be given to the Department of Labour and used to improve the living standard of poor people in New Zealand by creating new jobs. If unemployed people get jobs they may feel more confident, happier. They would have more money which means the gap between rich and poor would become smaller and a lowering of the crime rate could be a result.