

# Generic Hepatitis C treatment: fixing HepC

For years, the only treatment available for Hepatitis C was Interferon, (peg. and with ribavirin) and with frequently devastating side effects for the patient, and a low rate of recovery, it could not be universally prescribed. The only options available to patients whom Interferon could not cure was to wait, either waiting to die or for a new treatment to be developed. This could have changed after Dr Raymond Schinazi; a scientist working in the US Department of Veterans' Affairs made the breakthrough that would lead to Sofosbuvir, a drug designed to treat Hepatitis C. This drug would prove to be the first with a significant cure rate for Hepatitis C, one of the [5 biggest killers](#) among infectious diseases in the world, and the [biggest killer of Americans](#) among any infectious disease. Dr Schinazi founded and owned a 4% share in Pharmasset, which he worked for part time while developing and trialling this drug with the VA. He worked 1/8th of his time with his company, the rest with the VA. He finished the drug while working that 1/8th of his week with his own company, and retained the intellectual property for the drug even though it had been developed in a government lab.

After trials of the drug were successful, Schinazi sold Pharmasset to Gilead Sciences for 11 billion USD in 2011, earning [over 400 million dollars profit](#) on his 4% share. In 2013, the FDA approved Sofosbuvir in combination with other drugs for treatment of some forms of Hepatitis C and it has been on the market since then. This was the first of a number of drugs to approved by the FDA which Gilead have since been selling for a [massive profit](#). With drugs selling for upwards of \$1000 a pill ([and rising](#)), very few patients can afford treatment for the disease and many people are without hope for treatment.

But this is not just a story about corporate corruption and greed. This is not entirely about over [700,000 people dying per year](#) from a now curable disease, nor is it about a company willfully letting millions of people die to make as much money as possible while curing as few people as they can. It is also a story of how a few people have directly confronted some of the most powerful and profitable global businesses. These people are curing themselves and saving each other, despite the best efforts of these pharmaceutical warlords to protect their bottom line.

In January 2015 an Indian patent office official named Hardev Karar rejected Gilead's patent on Sofosbuvir on grounds of non-inventiveness, meaning that pharmaceutical companies would be free to produce, export and sell generic versions of the drug for any price they choose. Karar faced [an immediate backlash](#) from within his organization, from Gilead lawyers, and from powerful figures in politics. Soon after the patent was rejected, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, under pressure from the US government, made a joint statement with US president Barack Obama, pledging to create a "high-level" intellectual property group with "appropriate decision-making and technical-level meetings". Despite this pressure Karar's decision to reject the patent would prove to be a momentous one.

In February of 2015 Dr James Freeman helped a patient access affordable [generic drugs from China](#). After this success, Dr Freeman started [fixhepc.com](#) to [help other people](#) suffering from Hep C, and the first [Hep C buyers club](#) was born. Around the same time, Greg Jefferys travelled to India to be treated and cured after extensive research into the medications being produced there. Greg [blogged about his experience extensively](#), and has since gone on to make a full time

occupation of helping people all over the world access, safe, legal and affordable Hep C drugs through his own buyers club. Both Freeman's and Jeffrey's Buyers Clubs are complimentary to each other, each with their own approach and sources, each helping more people access the cures every day, each sharing resources in the aim of saving lives and [creating a Hepatitis C free world](#). They co-authored a global clinical trial presented and endorsed April 2016 <http://ilc-congress.eu/low-cost-generic-direct-acting-antiviral-treatment-hepatitis-c-equivalent-branded-formulations/>

The Sofosbuvir patent should never have fallen into [Gilead's](#) hands [in the first place](#). Sofosbuvir was created directly from another molecule developed in the VA lab, with grants from both VA and the NIH. Dr Shinazi was conspicuously absent when the US Congress began investigating him, and [retired](#) from the VA two days before the investigation began. Gilead were shown in a Senate Finance Committee report to have "focused on maximizing revenue— even as the company's analysis showed a lower price would allow more patients to be treated" [at dramatic cost](#) to the American health system.

In fact, it is at dramatic cost to humanity, and the families of over two million people who have died from Hepatitis C since these drugs first came onto the market. The pharmaceutical companies that supply the buyer's clubs are still producing generic alternatives to the expensive brand drugs, but as India has since [reversed course and granted Gilead their patent](#), the future of Hep C treatment is uncertain. This point in history could be the only window of opportunity that 155 million people living with Hepatitis C have to access affordable treatment. If made affordable to everyone it could be our chance as a species to eradicate this disease, we can start to treat everyone, not just those that are dying. Australia and France are the only countries in the world right now that will treat you regardless of how advanced the disease is.

So what can we do now? Tell your friends, share this post. Don't be afraid to talk about it. If English is your second language or you are fluent in another, [fixhepc](#) are [desperate for translators](#) to help make the buyer's clubs available to more people around the world! If you have the skills, your translation might be the most important 1 hours work you ever do in terms of global impact. Your translation could save lives.

We need to make it impossible for [Gilead](#) to hold back the floodgates, so they cannot profit from human suffering. This should not be able to happen when a disease can be cured! If you or anyone else you know needs access to treatment, look up generic hepc treatment, reach out to [fixhepc.com](#), and spread the word.

<http://www.medpagetoday.com/MeetingCoverage/EASL/57399>

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/liv.13157/full>

<https://www.thefix.com/tasmanian-angel-leads-hep-c-sufferers-affordable-meds#.V2Fyff5XLYM.facebook>

<http://www.medpagetoday.com/PublicHealthPolicy/HealthPolicy/34103>

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-bernie-sanders/taxpayers-funded-a-lifesa\\_b\\_10968542.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-bernie-sanders/taxpayers-funded-a-lifesa_b_10968542.html)