

'Follow the Science':

nb: FTS is not a real thing



Special report: Prescribing generic DAA's; Doctors react

Dr James Freeman, GP2U, Hobart, Australia, leading generic DAA researcher: "One of the reasons I stay involved in generic Hep C treatment (now that Australia has open access to the medications) is that in over 2 decades of clinical medicine I have never seen such amazing medications. My father likens it to the invention of penicillin.

Most student doctors have this dream of doing secret doctor stuff and making patients better. The reality is a bit different...

With DAAs I can give patients back their health. That makes them feel good, they usually say thanks, and that makes me feel good. Helping patients get treated, has been the highlight of my medical career".



Left to right: Dr Sherine Halmy of Pharco and EEPI Industries, Dr James Freeman of FixhepC and sofosbuvir pioneer Dr Raymond Schinazi, Paris, EASL 2018, wearing the hep C butterfly, symbolising rising HCV free.

" I wouldn't hesitate to recommend their use"

Dr Alex Lampen-Smith is the Chief Medical Officer of the New Zealand Hepatitis Foundation. She has supported patients to use generic DAA's since the first clinical trial was presented at EASL 2016. The guidelines of NZ Society of Gastroenterologists include this option for genotypes 2-6 which have had few state funded DAA treatment options.

"Generic hepatitis c medications have been a lifesaver for patients with hepatitis c in New Zealand. I have personally supervised many treatments. Likewise, the majority of the Specialist Gastroenterologists in New Zealand have collectively treated hundreds of patients with these medications. We have found them to be as safe and effective as the considerably higher priced branded medicines. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend their use." said Dr Lampen-Smith.

Prof Darren Russell, Cairns Sexual Health Service, and James Cook University, Cairns, Australia. "Before the new hepatitis C medications became widely available in Australia in March, 2016, we were happy to provide advice and prescriptions to people wanting to access medications from abroad.

We also supported them while taking the new, generic medications and celebrated with them when they cured themselves of the virus. The generic treatments enabled many people in our city of Cairns to cure their hepatitis C".

Dr Brendan Arnold, Southern DHB Infectious Diseases Physician (NZ) sees no difficulty: "From the point-of-view of an Infectious Disease Physician, the angst around the use of generic medications for Hepatitis C is somewhat surprising. The use of generic medications sourced from outside jurisdictions, has long been part of HIV medicine. The original "Buyers Club" were patients afflicted with HIV desperately seeking their own solutions. While access to HIV medications has greatly improved, we are still faced with situations, where, because of visa-status or residency issues, we are unable to access funded care and treatment for some patients, and must resort to alternative supply. The use of generics for Hepatitis C is an analogous situation"