

FOR RELEASE
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Yukon government to cover cost of Hepatitis C drugs

WHITEHORSE—The Government of Yukon is allocating an additional \$1.277 million in the 2016/17 budget, pending legislative approval, to cover the costs of the Hepatitis C drugs, Sovaldi and Harvoni.

"These are expensive drugs," Health and Social Services Minister Mike Nixon said. "For this reason, we felt it was important to include them in the Yukon's drug formulary to help Yukoners who don't have access to private insurance or whose private insurance won't cover the entire cost."

Both Sovaldi and Harvoni have a cure rate of approximately 95 per cent. Depending on a number of clinical variables, a complete course of therapy can last eight to 24 weeks. Sovaldi and Harvoni have replaced interferon-based therapies that resulted in more frequent and significant side effects and lower cure rates.

"Yukoners who are prescribed these medications by the visiting infectious disease specialist will qualify for coverage either through the Chronic Disease and Disability Program or the Pharmacare Program, under Insured Health Services," Nixon added. "As well, these programs offer top-up coverage for individuals with private insurance."

Since February 2015, Insured Health has provided coverage for 25 individuals at a cost of \$2,408,257, or approximately \$96,330 per patient.

Hepatitis C is a complicated blood-borne infection. Some people's bodies clear the infection on their own, but for 70 to 80 per cent of individuals who become infected, Hepatitis C becomes a long-term, chronic infection. These are the people for whom treatment may be recommended.

In Yukon, 43 persons started treatment for Hepatitis C in 2015. This is a more than three-fold increase compared to previous years. Of those 43, 27 people started on Harvoni and 16 on Sovaldi.

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