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Dear Minister Ambrose:

I am writing to respectfully request the release of the Public Health Agency of Canada's new guidelines recommending increased hepatitis C screening for baby boomers. These guidelines, long-requested by organizations like HepCBC and the Canadian Liver Foundation, are long overdue.

Hepatitis C is a significant public health issue in Canada. The Public Health Agency of Canada indicates 44% of people living with hepatitis C do not know they are infected, and as a result, cannot receive medical care for their illness, and may even inadvertently pass it on to others. Untreated hepatitis C causes negative health outcomes for individuals living with the disease, as well as unnecessary costs to the health system.

The longer a person lives with hepatitis C - *especially when undiagnosed* - the more liver damage they suffer. Between 20 and 40% of all people with hepatitis C are expected to develop severe liver fibrosis or cirrhosis which often requires hospitalization. Total lifetime costs to manage untreated hepatitis C therapy range from \$100 589 for a person with severe fibrosis (F3), \$133 575 for a person with compensated cirrhosis (F4), and \$327 068 for a person requiring liver transplantation.

The majority of liver transplants in Canada are due to hepatitis C. In 2012, 62 people died waiting for a liver transplant, while 492 people remained on the waiting list.

New treatments for hepatitis C approved by Health Canada in 2014 have very high cure rates (97%) with few side effects. Now is the time for federal leadership in promoting hepatitis C screening, to ensure baby boomers living with hepatitis C can cure the disease now - and remain healthy well into their senior years.

In the interest of better health outcomes and stronger health care for people who are living with hepatitis C but do not yet know it, I urge you to release the Public Health Agency of Canada's new hepatitis C screening guidelines immediately.

Sincerely yours,

Rosemary Plummer, RN BSN
President
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