



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Experts meet to spur on New Zealand's hepatitis C elimination plan**

**WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND 4 MAY 2023** - AbbVie (NYSE: ABBV), has brought together leading local and international experts to discuss New Zealand's progress towards the World Health Organization (WHO) 2030 goal for hepatitis C (HCV) elimination. With only seven years to go, modelling indicates New Zealand will not reach this target with current activity.<sup>1</sup>

HCV is a communicable viral disease that can be treated and eliminated from New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> If left untreated, over many years chronic HCV infection can result in complications such as liver damage and cancer, a significant burden for individuals, their families and the health care system.<sup>3</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted elimination efforts through disruptions to healthcare services.<sup>4</sup> To reach elimination, NZ needs to treat at least 2,200 individuals per year<sup>1</sup>, a target that Professor Ed Gane, Professor of Medicine at the University of Auckland, believes is possible. Speaking at the meeting, Professor Gane said:

"HCV elimination is achievable in New Zealand, but we need to work together to address challenges like awareness, stigma, finding those lost to follow-up, testing of priority populations and linking everyone to care."

Practical measures raised to aid elimination included auditing hospital, general practice and laboratory databases to find people lost to follow-up, improving general population awareness and implementing wider screening programmes in the general population supported by pharmacies and general practitioners.

"Hepatitis C needs to be front of mind for all healthcare professionals particularly GPs. Screening needs to be a priority if we are to find, treat and prevent transmission of HCV to others," Professor Gane added.

Professor Gane was joined by international experts Homie Razavi, Founder of the US Center for Disease Analysis Foundation, and Professor Greg Dore, Head of the Viral Hepatitis Clinical Research Program, Kirby Institute UNSW, Sydney Australia. These international guests shared data on global progress to elimination and innovative models of care that have helped other countries on their pathways to elimination. The program also included Professor Tim Dare, Professor of Philosophy, University of Auckland, who discussed the importance of and ethical issues around registries for hepatitis C in New Zealand, and representatives from Te Aka Whai Ora and Ministry of Health who shared their views on health equity and the role of public health units in elimination.

Commenting on the meeting, Kylie Pennington, Country Head, New Zealand AbbVie said: “The importance of reaching HCV elimination isn’t just about hitting a target that has been set. It’s recognising that by hitting that target we are helping thousands of New Zealanders who live with hepatitis C. AbbVie’s commitment to eliminating HCV in New Zealand goes beyond the medicine we provide, and we will continue to work in partnership with all stakeholders to address this important public health issue.”

## **About AbbVie**

AbbVie’s mission is to discover and deliver innovative medicines that solve serious health issues today and address the medical challenges of tomorrow. We strive to have a remarkable impact on people’s lives across several key therapeutic areas: immunology, oncology, neuroscience, eye care, virology, women’s health and gastroenterology, in addition to products and services across its Allergan Aesthetics portfolio. For more information about AbbVie, please visit us at [www.abbvie.co.nz](http://www.abbvie.co.nz). Follow @Abbvie\_NZ on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or our [LinkedIn](#) page.

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## **References**

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