

Breaking Barriers: River Stone Recovery Centre's Advocacy for Enhanced Hepatitis C Care in New Brunswick, Canada



Pittman M ^{1,2,4}, MacDonald B ^{1,4}, Davidson S ^{1,3,4}

1 River Stone Recovery Centre, Fredericton New Brunswick, Canada,
2 Action Hepatitis Canada, 3 Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick,
4 Horizon Health Network, New Brunswick



Background:

River Stone Recovery Centre (RSRC) has been at the forefront of efforts to reduce policy barriers related to hepatitis C virus (HCV) care in New Brunswick. Recognizing the challenges faced by individuals accessing care, we have actively engaged in advocacy and policy change initiatives to improve the landscape of HCV treatment and management. Efforts have focused on working towards same-day treatment starts, eliminating unnecessary requirements for DAA treatment initiation, and implementing innovative testing and treatment approaches.



Effectiveness:

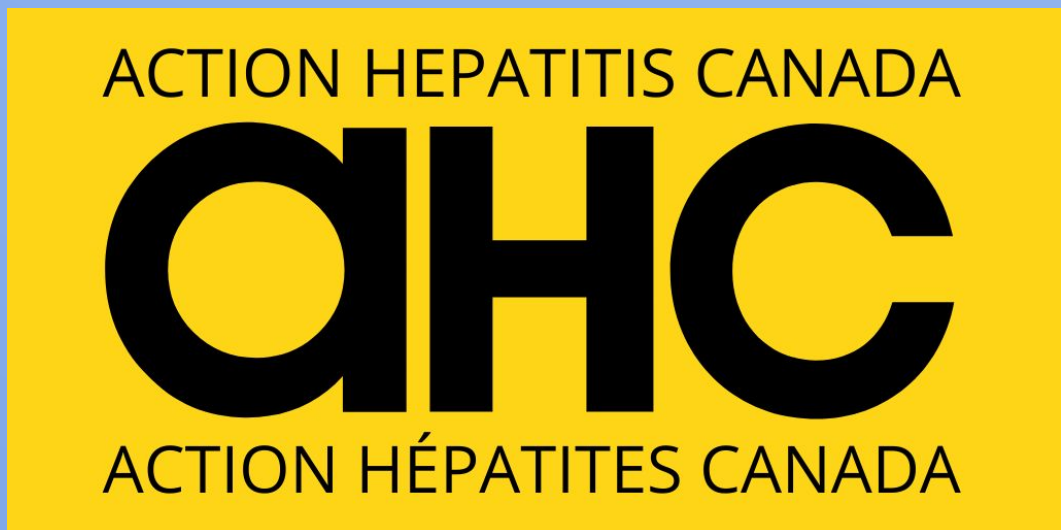
HCV advocacy efforts have resulted in significant policy changes within our provincial government. This includes the elimination of genotyping and fibrosis score requirements for treatment-naïve individuals without signs of decompensated cirrhosis, which took effect in February 2024. RSRC secured a GeneXpert machine through Health Canada's Special Access Program, allowing for same-day HCV treatment starts and eliminating months to years of treatment delay.

Description of Model of Care & Intervention Program:

RSRC has been conducting dried blood spot testing (DBST) training outreach, during events, including with healthcare staff in Indigenous communities. Being on the steering committee of Action Hepatitis Canada (AHC) allowed us to contribute to national advocacy efforts and policy discussions, amplifying the impact beyond New Brunswick.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

Next steps include rolling out GeneXpert programming for same-day treatment starts, continuing to support Indigenous, and rural communities with DBS and nurse-led HCV programming, and educating community partners about policy changes and nurse-led HCV treatment. The proactive approach to policy advocacy has made a tangible impact on HCV care in New Brunswick, and their ongoing efforts are poised to further improve access and outcomes for affected individuals.



Contact:
Michelle Pittman, MN, NP
<https://www.riverstone.recoverynb.ca>
Email: help@recoverynb.ca
Ph: 1 (506) 447-9634
E3B - 1E3