

ANNEX 18
Annex 18**HEPATITIS C LIVER DISEASE AND ITS TREATMENT**

This sheet is to give you more information regarding the hepatitis C virus. Your blood tests show that you have the hepatitis C virus. This may cause inflammation of your liver known as hepatitis. In some individuals the inflammation in the liver may become chronic, giving rise to more long-term damage to the liver which can, in some cases, be severe.

We may be able to offer you treatment with a drug called **INTERFERON** which is of benefit to some who have hepatitis C virus infection.

Investigations

To help us decide if you would benefit from Interferon therapy we may need to do some tests. These may include:-

1. An ultrasound scan of your abdomen. This can be done as an outpatient.
2. An endoscopy where you swallow a small flexible telescope to allow us to see the inside of your stomach. This is done as an inpatient and you would need to stay in hospital overnight following the endoscopy.
3. A laparoscopic examination of your liver when a very small telescope is inserted through your abdominal wall to have a look at your liver. In some people it may be helpful to take a tiny piece of the liver, to look at under the microscope (this is called a liver biopsy), at the same time as the laparoscopy. This is done as an inpatient and usually you will need to stay in hospital for four nights. The endoscopy and laparoscopic liver biopsy can both be performed during the same admission.

The endoscopy and laparoscopic liver biopsy can occasionally cause bleeding. The procedures will be carried out by experienced doctors and you will be given treatment with FVIII or FIX beforehand, and will be monitored afterwards.

The tests will help us to decide if you will benefit from Interferon treatment, but if you do not want to have the tests, we may still be able to offer you treatment.

Treatment

Interferon is given as a small injection just below the skin three times each week. We will teach you how to give the injections yourself. About half of the patients who are treated with Interferon will have an improvement in their liver function tests. We will test your blood two weeks after starting Interferon and then monthly

In/

In those in whom there is no improvement we may stop the Interferon as it is not being effective. For those who show an improvement in their liver function tests we will treat for six months. For some individuals, who opt to take part in the national study on hepatitis C in haemophiliacs, treatment may continue for a further six months.

At the beginning of a course of treatment, injections may be followed by a fever for a few hours. This is less troublesome if the injections are given in the evening along with two paracetamol tablets. With Interferon persistent side effects are uncommon. Occasionally there may be tiredness, depression and a fall in the blood count. These side effects are reversible if the dose of the drug is reduced.

Sexual transmission and Pregnancy

Studies have shown that there is a very low risk of sexual transmission of hepatitis C. This can be discussed with you at the clinic. We will be offering testing to all sexual partners of patients who have hepatitis C infection. If you would like to bring your partner along with you to your clinic appointment, we will be pleased to try and answer any further questions you may have.

It is very important that any female patient receiving treatment with Interferon should use an effective method of contraception to avoid pregnancy, and any male patient receiving treatment should not make his partner pregnant. This is because at present there is no information available about the safety of Interferon use in pregnancy.

Alcohol

You will know that alcohol can damage your liver. As you may have inflammation of your liver due to the hepatitis C virus, it may be prudent to limit your alcohol intake to a moderate level. If you are a man you should not drink more than 21 units of alcohol per week. If you are a woman you should not drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week (1 unit of alcohol is equivalent to 1/2 pint of beer or 1 glass of wine or 1 pub measure of spirits). The lower your alcohol intake the better.

You will no doubt have lots of questions having read this and we would suggest that you make a list of these to bring with you to the liver clinic when we will try our best to answer them for you.

CHECKLIST FOR INTERFERON THERAPY

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>Initials</u>
1. Discussion of hepatitis C and Interferon,
2. Seen at Liver Clinic?
3. Hepatitis C information sheet given?
4. Screening blood tests for other causes of liver disease taken?
5. Endoscopy?
6. Laparoscopy?
7. Laparoscopic liver biopsy?
8. Abdominal ultrasound?
9. Sexual transmission discussed?
10. Partner offered testing?
11. Partner tested?
12. Advice regarding alcohol given?
13. Advice regarding pregnancy given?
14. Interferon treatment schedule explained?
15. Expected response rate to Interferon discussed?
16. Side effects of Interferon discussed?
17. Duration of Interferon treatment and Trial discussed?
18. Interferon injection booklet given?
19. Eligibility for Trial checked and checklist completed?
20. Bloods taken for Trial Centre prior to treatment?