

## PRESS RELEASE

### MPs back call for Government commitment to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030

**MAIDENHEAD, Nov. 15, 2017** – AbbVie is supporting a roundtable meeting, co-Chaired by Virendra Sharma, MP for Ealing Southall and Charles Gore, Chief Executive of The Hepatitis C Trust, to discuss the actions needed to ensure that the Government meets its commitment to eliminating hepatitis C (HCV) as a major public health threat by 2030. The meeting will focus on what can be done to help tackle HCV in marginalised communities and minority ethnic groups, who remain at risk for hepatitis C.

Around 160,000 people in England are estimated to be chronically infected with hepatitis C<sup>1</sup>, a curable blood-borne virus that can cause fatal liver damage and cancer if left untreated<sup>2</sup>. Those thought to be most at risk include those who inject drugs and those from black and minority ethnic groups.<sup>1</sup> These groups are frequently in areas of the UK where there is a disproportionate prevalence of HCV and where the virus serves to reinforce and sustain cycles of deprivation and inequality.

With the introduction of new and effective antiviral medicines, many people with hepatitis C have been able to receive treatment and clear the virus, although nowhere near enough to put the UK on track to eliminate the virus by the World Health Organization's target of 2030.<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that half of those affected with HCV remain undiagnosed, and without access to proper care and support services.<sup>1</sup>

“Treating hepatitis C in our communities is not a choice, it’s a responsibility. Following through on that responsibility requires us to take a different approach to treating people who may be unaware of their HCV status, afraid to access treatment because of stigma, or who fall outside of the healthcare system, for reasons often beyond their control. We need to do everything we can to ensure that all those at risk and living with hepatitis C are identified, supported and treated, as a matter of public health importance,” said Virendra Sharma, Labour MP for Ealing Southall.

With no comprehensive strategy to tackle HCV in England, Mr Sharma will table a Motion in Parliament following today’s meeting in Westminster, which seeks to hold the Government to account on its publically stated commitment to eliminate hepatitis C as a public health threat by 2030. Those attending today’s meeting are invited to sign up to the Motion.

AbbVie, a global biopharmaceutical company, is working with a range of stakeholders, including organisations such as The Hepatitis C Trust, to deliver better outcomes for people affected by HCV across the UK. Dr Alice Butler, Medical Director for AbbVie UK said: “Current models of treatment and care are based within hospital settings but we need to move closer to where those affected with HCV are - in the community - to offer services that are local, more flexible to peoples’ needs, and quicker for people to access.”



Charles Gore, Chief Executive, The Hepatitis C Trust, said: “The NHS has a massive opportunity to invest in a real commitment to eliminate hepatitis C, through new long-term activities with industry, stakeholders and community-based organisations across the health sector. This will require us to focus on testing and treating more patients, faster, in ways that are less traditional for our national healthcare system. It is only with this step-change in approach that England will be successful in eliminating hepatitis C as a public health threat by 2030.”

### **About AbbVie**

AbbVie is a global, research-driven biopharmaceutical company committed to developing innovative advanced therapies for some of the world’s most complex and critical conditions. The company’s mission is to use its expertise, dedicated people and unique approach to innovation to markedly improve treatments across four primary therapeutic areas: immunology, oncology, virology and neuroscience. In more than 75 countries, AbbVie employees are working every day to advance health solutions for people around the world. For more information about AbbVie, please visit us at [www.abbvie.co.uk](http://www.abbvie.co.uk) and on Twitter @abbvieuk.

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### **References**

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