



# Community Connections

Keeping Nova Scotians Informed about Hepatitis

May 2009

## Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> is World Hepatitis Day



- Do you have questions or seek information about hepatitis?
- Are you newly diagnosed and need support?
- Feeling alone and want to talk to someone who understands?

“Because shockingly one in 12 people worldwide is living with either chronic hepatitis B or hepatitis C. While this is far higher than the prevalence of HIV or any cancer, awareness is inexplicably low and the majority of those infected are unaware.”

-- World Hepatitis Alliance [www.aminumber12.org](http://www.aminumber12.org)

### Taking It to the Streets

To mark World Hepatitis Day, in conjunction with the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Society for International Health, the Canadian Liver Foundation, the Canadian Haemophilia Society and the Canadian Ethnocultural Council and other national, provincial and local organizations, the Hepatitis Outreach Society is orchestrating a province-wide awareness campaign with members, volunteers, community-based organizations, medical professional and other concerned Nova Scotians.

Coined THATTS Nova Scotia (Taking Hepatitis Awareness To The Streets of Nova Scotia), this awareness campaign will target Nova Scotians from Yarmouth to Amherst to Sydney to Halifax and many points in between. For more information, please visit the Society’s website at [www.HepatitisOutreach.com](http://www.HepatitisOutreach.com). Click the icon in the top right corner.

#### Important Editor’s Note:

Due to Influenza A (H1N1) THATTS Nova Scotia awareness campaign may have to be scaled back or possibly even cancelled. Outside of Halifax, most of the volunteers are Public Health Nurses, and they have been working very hard dealing with and/or preparing for this influenza outbreak. Please visit our website at [www.HepatitisOutreach.com](http://www.HepatitisOutreach.com) for the latest information should we need to cancel in some areas.

### In Her Own Words

The Hepatitis Outreach Society strongly encourages members to write about their experiences. These “primary” or “first” voices help those without hepatitis learn what it is like to live with these viruses. A regular and very popular contributor, Bette MacAloney, has faithfully submitted an article, but due to space limitations, it will not appear until the summer issue.

Thanks for understanding Bette, and keep up the good work!

### CALL US

WE’RE HERE  
FOR  
YOU!

#### In this issue:

My Introduction to Hepatitis C .....	2
The Society’s Online Auction .....	3
Your Way to Wellness .....	3
Program Coordinator’s Message .....	3
Annual General Meeting .....	4
Are You a Lucky Duck? .....	4
About the Society ...	4

## My Introduction to Hepatitis C




---

*"I have no clue  
how or when  
I was infected  
with hepatitis C."*

"Rose, I'm looking at test results that were done by your life insurance provider and they are indicating that you tested positive for Hepatitis C." I'll never forget that phone call I received at work from my doctor on December 18, 2007.

"Have you ever had a blood transfusion?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," I responded as I struggled to understand what was being said as my stomach plummeted to my feet.

"I'm not too concerned," he quickly added. "I figure it's a false positive. I'll leave the papers for blood work at the front desk. May I search your old hospital files to see if you ever had a transfusion?"

"Yes," I responded, still reeling from this possible health issue.

I had the blood tests done immediately. The waiting began and finally my test results were sent back to my doctor six weeks later. The receptionist called me at work and indicated that the doctor wanted to see me regarding the results. I figured the news was not good, however there was still hope that it was a huge mistake and at least there would be an end to this waiting.

"I cannot understand what took the lab so long to get these results back to us and I'm even more shocked that this second test came back positive," he said. "I have checked your old files at the hospital and there is no record of any blood transfusion for any of the surgeries you had in the past. You'll have to be genotyped and I'm not really sure of the differences of genotyping, but I'll have that done for you prior to seeing a specialist in Halifax." My doctor kept the conversation going while I was reeling with shock and denial. As he was searching for a reference book to order the lab-work he discreetly turned to me and asked, "Rose, have you ever tried intravenous drugs?" I was confused and stunned to hesitation not comprehending what was being implied before I answered him. I stuttered out a "No". He quickly added "it only takes one time doing it."

The stigma was now upon me. I find this interesting as it should not matter how someone gets any virus. However it does matter how we are treated by the medical profession and society in general. I had no proof of a blood transfusion therefore the automatic assumption by my doctor was that I must have been a drug user at least one time in my life. Not true, but without proof, assumptions are made.

The insurance company immediately dropped my temporary insurance policy and refunded my money. This is all out discrimination however I am unable to protest. My doctor indicated that he had to notify hospital personnel regarding any tests that I was having done that I was a bio-hazard. I was distraught that this had to be written on my files. Of course, when I went for tests the nurse asked me why my paper was labeled with "BIO-HAZARD". I was extremely uncomfortable and upset that I was even asked.

I have no clue how or when I was infected with hepatitis C.

My doctor had to notify Public Health and the representative I had to contact quizzed me to find a possible source of my infection. It was not a good experience for me dealing with Public Health as I felt that they were not able to support or find me support as I was coping with being newly diagnosed. I knew that the nurse was grasping for the source of the infection and concluded that the one risky behavior that could have contributed to my diagnosis was the fact that I had my ears pierced in the 70's. She would not even address the many medical or dental procedures performed throughout my life.

Throughout all of these situations that I experienced when I was first diagnosed I realized that my dignity was slowly being chipped away and the worst offenders were people in health care in my area. HCV is an insidious virus and it does not discriminate. It just needs a host. However whomever it infects may be blatantly discriminated against.

One of the first things to be addressed is the ignorance of some in the medical profession regarding blood borne viruses. The treatment I received from the local medical profession made me very aware of the stigma attached to hepatitis C, therefore, I chose to receive treatment through the Halifax clinic where I could remain fairly anonymous.

It's a lonely isolating diagnosis.

"Rose" -- Completed 72 weeks of treatment February 2009

Editor's Note: "Rose" (not her real name) only recently learned of the Hepatitis Outreach Society and is a new contributor to Community Connections. If you would like to contact her, please email: [RespondToRose@gmail.com](mailto:RespondToRose@gmail.com).

## The Society's Online Auction

Get ready! It's almost here. On Thursday, May 14<sup>th</sup>, the Society's online auction will open. Many great items have been donated by our supporters. Please come have a look. Shopping couldn't get any easier. Or more fun!

This year we are most fortunate to have the generous support of RealDecoy, a web applications and software development company in Ottawa, with a long history of community involvement.

Found an item that you have to have but you're going to be away from your computer for a few days? Not a problem with RealDecoy's RealAuction software and the proxy bidding function. Make a bid on an item, then tell it to proxy bid in certain dollar amounts to a maximum price.

Come visit our website at [www.HepatitisOutreach.com](http://www.HepatitisOutreach.com) and click on the RealAuction icon from May 14<sup>th</sup> to June 1<sup>st</sup>. You'll soon discover why the Society is so grateful to all our supporters for believing in the work we do.



May is Hepatitis Awareness Month!  
Have you thought about getting tested?

## Your Way to Wellness

Based on the Stanford Self Management Program, *Your Way to Wellness* is a provincial Chronic Disease Self Management program. Taught by people with chronic disease for people with chronic disease, the program recognizes that, although chronic conditions may cause different physical symptoms, they may also cause similar problems related to:

- activities of daily living (ADL)
- interactions with the health care system,
- communication with family and friends, and
- dealing with negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and depression

*Your Way to Wellness* is offered free of charge to people with a chronic condition(s) and to their family, friends or care givers. It is offered once a week for a 2 ½ hour session over six consecutive weeks. The program is at various stages of rollout in the district health authorities. For more information about the program in your District, please call 1-888-672-3444 or email [YourWay2Wellness@gov.ns.ca](mailto:YourWay2Wellness@gov.ns.ca)



## Program Coordinator's Message

As promised in January's newsletter, 2009 will be busy at the Society. Already this year we participated in a very successful Health and Wellness Fair sponsored by MISA (Metropolitan Immigrant Settlers Association). We had over 100 people stop at our display to discuss hepatitis and to wear a hepatitis C awareness ribbon.

Our chairperson, Sandra Low, and I set up our display at the Department of Health's Communicable Disease Conference. This gave us an excellent opportunity to meet some Public Health Nurses and other staff from around the province and discuss ways of working closer. I've also been to some schools to further test our Safer Tattooing and Piercing program which is still in development. Stay tuned! Angus



"If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in the dark with a mosquito." Anonymous

## Hepatitis Outreach Society

2973 Oxford Street  
Halifax, NS  
B3L 2W3

PHONE:  
902-420-1767  
1-800-521-0572

FAX:  
902-463-6725

E-MAIL:  
info@  
HepatitisOutreach.com

---

We're on the Web!

See us at:

**HepatitisOutreach.com**

---

### Board of Directors

Sandra Low  
Heather d'Entremont  
Wanda MacDonald  
Carla Burgess  
Jeff Lewis  
Juanita MacPhee

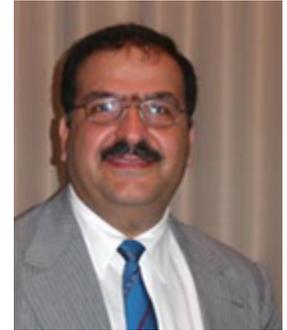
### Staff

Angus Campbell

## Annual General Meeting

You are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Hepatitis Outreach Society

- 🕒 Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup>
- 🕒 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
- 📍 The Weather Watch Room  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Dickson Building  
5820 University Avenue  
Halifax, NS
- 👤 Guest Speaker:  
Dr. Kevork Peltekian, MD FRCPC
- 🍷 Refreshments will be served



Dr. Kevork Peltekian,  
MD FRCPC

## Are You a Lucky Duck?

This year the Society sold Lucky Duck tickets again as a joint fundraising activity with Recreation Nova Scotia. Thank you to everyone who purchased tickets, and an extra big thank you to Dee Mombourquette and Patricia Myatt, two big supporters of the Society, who helped us sell tickets and raise \$539.00 to be used towards programming.

The draw was held at the Recreation Nova Scotia office by an auditor, and the official winners are:  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize \$3000 cash – N. Sullivan, Glace Bay  
2<sup>nd</sup> Prize \$500 cash – E. Romand, Cheticamp  
3<sup>rd</sup> Prize Weekend Getaway – T. MacDonald

Regional winners of \$100 each went to: Gerry Field – Parrsboro (Fundy Region), T. Bollivar – Wolfville (Valley), Bill Baker – Bridgewater (South Shore), Donald Scott – Lockeport (South West), Frank Norris – New Glasgow (Highland), Martha Rhynold – Canso (Cape Breton), and Jack Evans – Halifax (Central).



## About The Society

The Hepatitis Outreach Society is a charitable organization committed to community capacity and development, health promotion, public awareness, and implementation of social support networks throughout Nova Scotia for those infected, affected and at-risk of developing hepatitis.

Working with volunteers and community partners since 1999, the Society strives to educate Nova Scotians about hepatitis and its prevention, reduce social stigmatization and isolation, and prevent the spread of hepatitis.

Our work would not be possible without the commitment and dedication of our volunteers, members and donors. Please contact us to discuss how you can make a difference.

**Get Involved! Get Connected! Volunteer!**