



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

aidspan-logo Alliance Ukraine Brokers Deal for Significant Reduction in Cost of HCV Treatment

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Ukraine (Alliance Ukraine) says that it has reached an agreement with MSD, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical producers, to more than halve the cost of a 48-week treatment course for hepatitis C (HCV) for its treatment initiative in Ukraine. MSD is known as Merck in the US and Canada.

Alliance Ukraine said in a [news release](#) that the price for the course of treatment was reduced from \$13,200 to \$5,000. It added that the substantial reduction will enable Alliance Ukraine to secure HCV treatment for 100 highly vulnerable patients with HIV/HCV co-infection by purchasing pegylated interferon and ribavirin, two key components of the treatment course.

The first patients will be enrolled into HCV treatment in Ukraine in early November 2013. Alliance Ukraine's HCV treatment initiative is funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The news release said that "this new dramatic reduction in HCV treatment costs presents a real breakthrough and opens the door for hundreds of people who are co-infected with HCV and HIV."

Andriy Klepikov, Alliance Ukraine's Executive Director, said: "We have managed to overcome the key obstacle when it comes to accessing hepatitis C treatment – the price. This project should now become a catalyst for change in Ukraine and the wider region."

"I'm one of the many Ukrainians for whom this treatment will save life," said Vlad Deineka, who has been waiting for HCV treatment for more than 10 years.

Alliance Ukraine said that there is a dramatic unmet need in HCV treatment, both in Ukraine and globally. It cites the World Health Organisation as saying that HCV kills 350,000 people per year, and that another 150 million have the chronic form of the virus. According to Alliance Ukraine, Ukraine has the highest HCV prevalence in Europe; the number of people infected could be as high as 1.2 million.

HCV is called the “hidden epidemic” and high treatment cost has historically been the main reason why national governments and international donors have failed to invest in this public health issue, Alliance Ukraine said.

Mr Klepikov said that making HCV available in Ukraine at a substantially lower price is the result of “a partnership, which brings together the international donor community, NGO and private sectors, as well as government and patient organizations in a promising new collaboration.”

Under the terms of the new partnership, Alliance Ukraine said, people living with HIV who are co-infected with HCV will be eligible for treatment in six regions of Ukraine: Kyiv, Poltava, Sumy, Vinnitsa, Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolayiv. Local NGOs will provide support for patients. The State Service of Ukraine on HIV/AIDS and Other Socially Dangerous Diseases, and the Ukrainian Center for Socially Dangerous Disease Control, under the Ministry of Health, will provide overall coordination of the programme.

Alliance Ukraine said that with the support of the Global Fund, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, the Open Society Foundation and the International Renaissance Foundation, it has been advocating for lower prices and greater access to HCV treatment since 2011. Alliance Ukraine said that limited competition between the manufacturers of efficient HCV medicines has kept the cost of treatment high.

Messages of congratulations poured into Alliance Ukraine when the news became public. Messages were received from sources such as Mark Dybul, Global Fund Executive Director; Anna Shakarishvili, Senior Advisor, U.S. Liaison Office, UNAIDS; former Global Fund Executive Director Michel Kazatchkine; Jeffrey O'Malley, Director of Policy and Strategy at UNICEF; Dr Eliot Ross Albert, Executive Director of the International Network of People Who Use Drugs; Billy Pick of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and Daniel Wolfe, of Open Society Foundations.

US Global AIDS Coordinator Eric Goosby wrote: “Congratulations to you and your team on bringing an effective treatment into reach of thousands in need. Again, a tribute to your cumulative contribution to the ability to live for HIV infected communities in the Ukraine. Thank you for your sustained and effective work.”

Alliance Ukraine said that the price of government-procured HCV treatment in the Russian Federation and several other countries in the region varies from \$12,000 to \$17,000 a year.

This article was altered after it was first posted on GFO Live to add Global Fund Executive Director Mark Dybul to the list of people who sent congratulatory messages to Alliance Ukraine.

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