



CANADIAN ETHNOCULTURAL COUNCIL /CONSEIL ETHNOCULTUREL DU CANADA

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Health Project Educates Ethnocultural Communities about Hepatitis C and Related Diseases

June 13, 2014, Ottawa - Hepatitis C poses a serious threat to population health. Many immigrants come to Canada from countries with a high prevalence of hepatitis C (3% or higher). Individuals who are unaware that they are infected can spread the disease. Chronic hepatitis can lead to liver damage, liver cancer, and the need for liver transplants.

For the past ten years, the Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC) has worked with the Canadian Liver Foundation and community organizations to inform Canadian communities about this important health issue.

In 2013, the CEC began a project entitled “Hepatitis C and Other Related Communicable Diseases in High-Risk Immigrant Ethnic Communities”. This project broadened the scope of the CEC’s previous hepatitis C initiatives to include hepatitis B and HIV. It focused on Canadians whose origin is from China, Egypt, India, the Philippines, and Vietnam – all countries in which the prevalence rate of hepatitis C is 3% or higher.

In collaboration with the Canadian Liver Foundation, the CEC created resources for healthcare providers, namely a training manual and PowerPoint presentation, as well as fact sheets about the illnesses and prevalence rates in home countries for members of ethnic communities. The fact sheets were created in English and French for the five selected communities (Chinese, East Indian, Egyptian, Filipino, and Vietnamese) as well as translated into seven languages (Arabic, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Punjabi, Tamil, Tagalog, and Vietnamese).

The CEC then approached healthcare providers in each of the five immigrant ethnic communities in five major Canadian cities (Calgary, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg) and briefed them about the objectives of the project. Many of these individuals had worked with the CEC on previous hepatitis C projects. These 25 individuals agreed to be volunteer lead trainers who would educate people in their respective communities about the prevalence of hepatitis C, hepatitis B, and HIV, their means of transmission, treatment, and prevention. Over a two-day training session held in Ottawa in February 2014, and using resources the CEC had developed in partnership with the Canadian Liver Foundation, these healthcare workers had the opportunity to learn about these illnesses and share useful tips for training specific to their own communities.

Each lead trainer was then responsible for organizing a workshop in their home city with people from their community in February or March of 2014. Some of the attendees were healthcare or community care providers, whereas others were people from the community who had a personal interest in the illnesses. All of them have the potential to share what they learned with others from their community.

In total, 294 individuals attended the 25 workshops. Most found the information useful and realized that these illnesses pose a serious threat to their communities and that they should encourage community members to get tested for them.

“We received excellent feedback,” said Lou Sekulovski, CEC President. For example, one of the participants in a Toronto workshop said that the session was "extremely informative and useful; [he] had no idea about the extent of these diseases".

All of the materials developed for the project (for both healthcare providers and members of ethnic communities) are now available on the Canadian Ethnocultural Council’s Hepatitis C Portal: www.ethnocultural.ca/HepC

The Canadian Ethnocultural Council - a coalition of organizations representing ethnocultural groups across Canada - promotes equality of opportunity and access to Canadian society, including health and social services, for all Canadians regardless of ethnic origin and works on projects that aim to remove systemic barriers to this access.

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The CEC is a non-profit, non-partisan coalition of national ethnocultural organizations. The CEC works to promote the understanding of the multicultural reality of Canada thereby ensuring equal opportunity and dignity for all Canadians regardless of race, religion, ethnicity and ancestry, as defined in The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and The Canadian Multiculturalism Act.