

New Protease Inhibitors Encourage More Immediate HCV Treatment, but Challenges Remain

HRA's Newest Study Will Uncover Opportunities to Maximize Cross-Stakeholder Communication and Education to Increase Scope of Treated Patients

Parsippany, New Jersey (July 19, 2012) – Major advances in Hepatitis C (HCV) treatment have recently emerged, led by the protease inhibitors Victrelis (Merck) and Incivek (Vertex); a number of new agents also are in development. Physicians' awareness and confidence in these new treatments will equate to a much greater likelihood of immediate treatment for those recently or newly diagnosed, but communicating the availability of these HCV treatments, encouraging a physician visit, and treatment initiation remain challenges – particularly for patients long-diagnosed with the disease. In addition, the treatment cycle – which can take up to 48 weeks – as well as the side effects associated with the required interferon alpha-2a therapy, creates patient compliance issues that physicians need to actively manage, according to new research being fielded by HRA – Healthcare Research & Analytics.

HRA's unique research program, **Hepatitis C: Optimizing Diagnosis and Treatment Pathways**, explores experiences and perspectives in the HCV space among multiple stakeholders. "The information we collect is designed to acknowledge the interaction and possible influence across stakeholders in the diagnosis and treatment decision," said Lisa Fox, HRA's Vice President of Strategic Syndicated Research. "The goal of this research is to identify for marketers the stakeholder synergies for improving disease awareness and initiating treatment intervention as early as possible. Ultimately, this research program will assist marketers in developing more effective integrated stakeholder education and communication strategies to improve the time to diagnosis, providing broader treatment access and higher rates of treatment compliance."

Methodologically, the program pairs extensive desk research with primary qualitative and quantitative research among key stakeholders: Primary Care Physicians, Hepatologists/ Gastroenterologists, Infectious Disease Specialists, HCV Nurse Specialists, patients and payors. It also includes perspectives from key opinion leaders (KOLs) in the treatment and payor spaces who are experts surrounding HCV management. The research covers a variety of topics, including the diagnosis, referral and treatment pathways of major HCV patient types; the impact of new and near-term DAA treatment on improved treatment and persistency rates; and payor influences on diagnosis and treatment processes.

"This research is meant to explore how physicians select patients for HCV treatment, and how all of the stakeholders – physician, patient, and payor – come together in the treatment decision," said John Maglione, President and General Manager of HRA. "Our initial research shows there are opportunities for marketers to more effectively support physicians and patients through the relatively short, but compliant-critical treatment journey."

HRA has completed the qualitative phase of research among providers and patients, and is poised to initiate the quantitative phase – to quantify physicians' decision-making criterion and determine how education and treatment support programs can help to expand the number of patients considered good candidates for treatment. Charter partnerships are still being sought for this initiative.

HRA – Healthcare Research & Analytics is a consultative healthcare market research practice leveraging a flexible spectrum of solutions to support decision-making and strategy development across healthcare channels with particular expertise in the hospital setting. HRA's team of highly-experienced market researchers combines deep domain expertise in healthcare, science, business, and statistics with a passion for uncovering insights. HRA's portfolio of offerings encompasses quantitative and qualitative, custom and syndicated market research services to support the business needs of the pharmaceutical, biotech, and medical device markets. HRA's people and its products provide the healthcare market with actionable intelligence – facilitating better business decisions.

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