UK Cohort for Acute Hepatitis C – Participant Information Sheet

Principal Investigator: *Professor Graham Cooke; Department of Infectious Diseases, Imperial College London.*

You are invited to participate in a study that aims to better understand acute Hepatitis C. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. The study team are available to give you more information, to answer any questions you might have about the study and to clarify any areas of uncertainty.

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this study.

What is the purpose of the study?

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a viral infection transmitted by exposure to infected body fluids. Whilst some people can be exposed to the virus and clear it themselves, the majority of people will develop a long-lasting infection unless they are treated. In some cases, people might not realize they are infected, nor have any specific symptoms. They can, however, unknowingly transmit the virus to other people. In other cases, HCV can cause inflammation in the liver, which may lead to problems like cirrhosis and liver cancer. HCV is a global problem and is a major cause of illness worldwide. Overall, we think that about 1.75 million people are newly infected with HCV every year and that the virus is responsible for roughly 600,000 deaths.

Until recently, HCV was very difficult to treat. We used to rely on medications that were only partly effective and often had many side effects. However, new drug classes have recently become available and have dramatically changed the way we treat HCV. These new drugs are called **directly acting antivirals** – or **DAAs** for short. In most cases, these new drugs can cure – on average – 95% of infected people. Whilst there are many challenges ahead, the success of these new drugs has led to hope that HCV can be eliminated as a major health problem worldwide.

There are several challenges to overcome in order to eliminate HCV as a global health problem. One of these is identify more people who are infected with HCV but don't yet know it. We also need to better understand how the infection is spread between people. The sooner that we diagnose people, the sooner we can start treatment and the lower the risk that HCV can be passed on to others.

In this study we're aiming to study recently acquired HCV infections (acute infections). This means people who have been infected (or re-infected) at some point within the past twelve months. Diagnosing new or acute infections can be very hard – often because there may not

be any symptoms. Earlier studies have given us clues as to how we might identify people at risk of acute infection, but we still don't fully understand how these infections can spread between groups of people – so-called **transmission networks**.

The main aim of this study is to better understand the ways in which the virus can spread between groups of people. We aim to do this by better understanding the people who are infected, how they were infected and by looking at the virus itself. We hope that this information will help us to design tools to reduce the spread of the infection.

Why have I been chosen?

We are approaching anyone who we have identified as having recently acquired HCV (acute hepatis C. This includes all people who have never had the infection before, as well as people who have previously been successfully treated but who have since been re-infected. We would like to invite you to participate in this study by completing a questionnaire and donating a blood sample to help us improve our understanding of HCV.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive.

What will happen to me if I take part?

There are two main components to this study, if you decide to take part.

The first is a questionnaire. We would ask you to complete a questionnaire that aims to understand what factors may have put you at risk for HCV infection and transmission. This will involve a series of questions on your personal activities, including those such as drug use, sexual practices and medical procedures. All of this information will be strictly confidential. We would ask that you complete a questionnaire each year for the duration of the study (four questionnaires in total), if you attend all of the study visits.

The second component of the study is to collect a blood sample. We would use this sample to study your HCV virus in detail – in particular, by determining its genetic sequence. This will tell us what sub-type or 'family' of virus you are infected with (the **genotype**) as well as how it is related to other circulating viruses (the **phylogeny**). We can use the genetic information of the virus to anonymously compare it to other HCV sequences, to explore potential

transmission patterns. It may also give us additional information, such as how well different drugs are likely to work. We will also use the sample to study low levels of virus in the blood (known as viral reservoirs) as well how your immune system is responding to the virus.

We would aim to collect about 20ml of blood (equivalent to ~4 small teaspoons). This sample would be collected in addition to tests that we would routinely recommend for your standard clinical care – extra tubes but no extra needles. We would collect this at your first visit and at any subsequent visits it you show any evidence of having been re-infected with HCV.

You may decide that you would like to take part in the study by answering the questionnaire only, without having a blood sample collected. In which case, we can still enrol you in the study.

This study will involve a total of four visits spread over four years, as shown below:

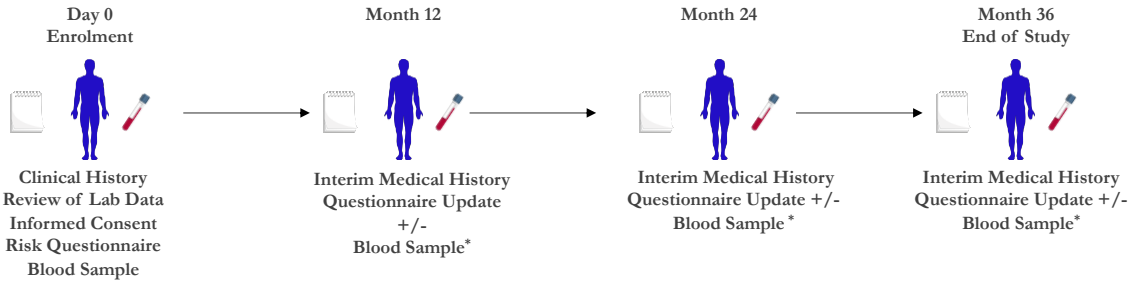

*Figure 1- Study overview. *Blood samples would be collected at follow up visits if there is evidence of re-infection.*

In the first visit we would give you information about the study and what it might involve. This will include the information included in this booklet, as well as by having the opportunity to ask questions to a member of the study team. You can take as long as you wish to think about whether or not to participate. If you decide to take part, we would ask you to sign a consent form. After signing the consent form, we would contact your GP to inform them of your participation and/or to verify previous test results. If you consent to take part in the study, we would then ask you to complete the questionnaire either on paper or using an app. Finally, we would collect a blood test. In total, this visit would take between 60-90 minutes.

Further visits would take place every 12 months – roughly at 12, 24 and 36 months after first enrolment. To minimize inconvenience to you, we would aim to align these in with routine visits that we would recommend as part of your normal care for HCV. At each of these visits,

we would check that you are still willing to take part in the study and ask you about any medical issues that have arisen in the preceding 12 months. We would then ask you to complete a follow-up questionnaire similar to at your first visit. If there is any evidence that you may have been re-infected with HCV (e.g. from your clinical history or blood tests) we would ask to collect an additional blood sample. If during the course of the study you were to lose capacity to consent to continuing in the study, we would withdraw you from the study. Any data and samples that we have collected would be retained and used in the study. No further data or samples will be collected.

It is important to emphasise that the management of your infection will be co-ordinated and managed by the clinical team at the NHS clinic. This study is running alongside your usual care in the NHS clinic, which will continue after the study has ended.

What do I have to do?

If you decide to take part in the study, we would ask you to complete a questionnaire and donate a blood sample as outlined above. The doctors and nurses in the Hepatitis clinic will advise on appropriate management for your condition and we recommend that you take any medication as directed. Participation in the study is not associated with any specific lifestyle restrictions, but the doctors and nurses in the clinic will advise you on what you can do to reduce the risk of transmitting Hepatitis C to other people.

As we classify this study as 'observational' there are no specific restrictions to taking part in other clinical trials at the same time, but you should inform other investigators that you are taking part in this study.

What is the drug or intervention that is being tested?

This is an observational study and we are not testing any specific drugs or interventions. Instead, we are aiming to better understand how new infections of Hepatitis C are acquired and transmitted, using the data that we can generate from the questionnaire and study of the virus.

Will you need to collect any information about me?

We would collect basic demographic information about all participants such as date of birth, country of birth, gender, place of residence etc. Finally, we will ask your consent to access your medical records to confirm your eligibility for the study and to gather information about your medical history. This will include details of other medical conditions, including HCV and sexually transmitted infections. We would also ask a series of questions to assess your understanding of HCV infection prior to taking part in this study and collect contact

information so that we can contact you to inform you of study appointments and send out any relevant correspondence.

The questionnaire contains a detailed series of questions related to activities that may have put you at risk for HCV infection. Some, all, or none of these questions will be relevant to you as an individual. We would like all participants to complete the questionnaire as fully and accurately as possible to gain a broad understanding of how new HCV infections are transmitted within the wider community.

We know from many earlier studies that injecting drugs can put people at risk of HCV infection. Because of this, we would like to ask you a series of questions on whether or not you routinely inject drugs and – if so – what types of drugs you might use, how often, by what route, who with and in what setting.

We also know from earlier studies that certain sexual behaviours can also put you at risk of HCV infection. To that end, we would also aim to collect information on sexual behaviours, such the number and gender of your partners; how and where you meet new partners and what activities you engage in – similar to the type of information collected as part of a routine sexual health screen.

All of the questions have been carefully chosen to help us meet the aims of the study. If you have trouble answering any of the questions or if anything requires clarification, then a member of the study team will be available to help. All of the information that we collect will be strictly confidential – neither you nor any of your friends, partners will be identifiable.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

This study involves some blood tests. Taking blood samples may sometimes result in slight pain or bruising to the area, and occasionally people can feel faint. Our trained team will be on hand to help in the unlikely event that any problems arise.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no direct benefit from taking part in the study, beyond receiving general information about your health. We hope that the knowledge gained from this study will contribute towards efforts to eliminate HCV as a global health problem.

What happens when the research study stops?

When the research study, members of the study team will review and analyse the data collected. This will eventually be collated into a research publication and presentation.

Throughout the entire study, the management of your infection will be co-ordinated and managed by the clinical team at the NHS clinic. This study is running alongside your usual care.

What if something goes wrong?
Imperial College London holds insurance policies which apply to this study. If you experience harm or injury as a result of taking part in this study, you will be eligible to claim compensation without having to prove that Imperial College is at fault.

This provision does not apply to claims which arise as a result of Hepatitis or any related conditions.

This does not affect your legal rights to seek compensation. If you are harmed due to someone's negligence, then you may have grounds for a legal action. Regardless of this, if you wish to complain, or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been treated during the course of this study then you should immediately inform the Principal Investigator (Professor Graham Cooke; g.cooke@ic.ac.uk). The normal National Health Service complaints mechanisms are also available to you such as contacting the local Patient Advice Liaison Services (PALS; pals@imperial.nhs.uk, 020 3313 0088). A member of the team will be able to give you their contact information upon request. If you are still not satisfied with the response, you may contact the Imperial College, Joint Research Compliance Office.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Participants will be assigned study ID number to keep their identifiable data and sample pseudonymised. Any paper records of the study such as your consent form that has your name on it and the paper CRFs will be locked in a secure individual NHS site. The electronic data from all the NHS sites will be stored on REDCap database which is stored in an encrypted computer server at Imperial College London. With your consent, your GP will be informed of your participation in the study.

Imperial College London is the sponsor for this study, which is based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you and your medical records in order to undertake this study and will act as the data controller for this study. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. Imperial College London will keep pseudonymised information from the study for ten (10) years after the study has finished in relation to data subject consent forms and primary research data. This will be held at Imperial College archives and Corporate Records Units (ACRU). Pseudonymised CRFs and any other documents related to primary and secondary endpoints of the study will also be transmitted to the Sponsor at completion of the study.
Further information on Imperial College London's retention periods may be found at https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/records-and-archives/public/RetentionSchedule.pdf.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally-identifiable information possible.

You can find out more about how we use your information by contacting the principal investigator (Professor Graham Cooke, g.cooke@imperial.ac.uk)

Legal Basis

As a university we use personally-identifiable information to conduct research to improve health, care and services. As a publicly-funded organisation, we have to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information from people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use your data in the ways needed to conduct and analyse the research study. Health and care research should serve the public interest, which means that we have to demonstrate that our research serves the interests of society as a whole. We do this by following the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.

International Transfers

There may be a requirement to transfer information to countries outside the European Economic Area (for example, to a research partner). Where this information contains your personal data, Imperial College London will ensure that it is transferred in accordance with data protection legislation. If the data is transferred to a country which is not subject to a European Commission (**EC**) adequacy decision in respect of its data protection standards, Imperial College London will enter into a data sharing agreement with the recipient organisation that incorporates EC approved standard contractual clauses that safeguard how your personal data is processed.

Contact Us

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data or if you want to find out more about how we use your information, please contact via Imperial College London's Data Protection Officer email at dpo@imperial.ac.uk, via telephone on 020 7594 3502 and via post at Imperial College London, Data Protection Officer, Faculty Building Level 4, London SW7 2AZ.

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). The ICO does recommend that you seek to resolve matters with the data controller (us) first before involving the regulator.

Collaborating NHS sites will keep your name, NHS number and contact details confidential and will not pass this information to Imperial College London. The collaborating NHS sites will use this information as needed, to contact you about the research study, and make sure that relevant information about the study is recorded for your care, and to oversee the quality of the study. Certain individuals from Imperial College London and regulatory organisations may look at your medical and research records to check the accuracy of the research study. Imperial College London will only receive information without any identifying information. The people who analyse the information will not be able to identify you and will not be able to find out your name, NHS number or contact details.

The study site NHS will keep identifiable information about you from this study for 10 years after the study has finished. For Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust patients this will be held at Imperial College Archives and Corporate Record Unit (ACRU).

When you agree to take part in a research study, the information about your health and care may be provided to researchers running other research studies in this organisation and in other organisations. These organisations may be universities, NHS organisations or companies involved in health and care research in this country or abroad. Your information will only be used by organisations and researchers to conduct research in accordance with the UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research**.**

Your information could be used for research in any aspect of health or care, and could be combined with information about you from other sources held by researchers, the NHS or government. Where this information could identify you, the information will be held securely with strict arrangements about who can access the information. The information will only be used for the purpose of health and care research, or to contact you about future opportunities to participate in research. It will not be used to make decisions about future services available to you, such as insurance. Where there is a risk that you can be identified your data will only be used in research that has been independently reviewed by an ethics committee.

What are your choices about how your information is used?

- You can stop being part of the study at any time, without giving a reason, but we will keep information about you that we already have.
- If you choose to stop taking part in the study, we would like to continue collecting information about your health from central NHS records and/or your hospital and/or your GP. If you do not want this to happen, tell us and we will stop.
- We need to manage your records in specific ways for the research to be reliable. This means that we won't be able to let you see or change the data we hold about you.

Where can you find out more about how your information is used?

You can find out more about how we use your information

- at www.hra.nhs.uk/information-about-patients/ or
- by asking one of the research team, or
- by sending an email to the Imperial College London's Data Protection Officer on dpo@imperial.ac.uk, or
- by ringing us on 020 7594 3502, or
- by post at Imperial College London, Data Protection Officer, Faculty Building Level 4, London SW7 2AZ

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be published in a scientific medical journal and/or presented at scientific conferences which can potentially take a few years. All publications will appear on the relevant areas of the Imperial college website. Your individual results would not be identifiable, nor would you be identified in any report or publication.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This study is being co-ordinated by a team of doctors and researchers from the Department of Infectious Diseases at Imperial College London, which is based at St Mary's Hospital. We are working with a number of researchers at other NHS sites who look after patients with Hepatitis C.

The study is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (the NIHR).

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has undergone peer-review by independent researchers, co-ordinated by the Joint Research Compliance Office at Imperial college London and also by the Health Research Authority (HRA). All research in the NHS is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by the London Westinster Research Ethics Committee (reference 19/LO/1859).

So, in summary, what would happen if I decide to take part in the study?

- We would provide you with this information sheet and discuss any questions you might have about the study.
- If you decide to take part, we would ask you to complete a consent form.
- We would then ask you to complete a questionnaire that aims to better understand factors associated with new HCV infection.
- We would then collect a blood sample to study your Hepatitis C virus.
- We would plan to follow you up once a year for three years, when would ask you to complete a repeat questionnaire and possibly collect another blood test.

Contact for Further Information

For general queries please contact: Dr Malick Gibani (m.gibani@ic.ac.uk) or the principal investigator, Professor Graham Cooke (g.cooke@ic.ac.uk).

Imperial College London is the main research Sponsor for this study. For further information regarding the sponsorship conditions, please contact the Head of Regulatory Compliance at:

Joint Research Compliance Office
Imperial College London and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
Room 215, Level 2, Medical School Building
Norfolk Place
London, W2 1PG
Tel: 0207 594 9459/ 0207 594 1862
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/clinicalresearchgovernanceoffice

Thank you for taking the time to consider taking part in this study.

We will provide you with a copy of the Participant Information Sheet to keep, as well as a copy of the signed Informed Consent form should you decide to participate.