

Vale Anita Roddick:

Hepatitis C Council Victoria acknowledges a public health advocate



The Hepatitis C Council of Victoria has expressed its sorrow to hear of the passing of Dame Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop cosmetics store. Dame Roddick was one of only a few well-known public advocates for people with hepatitis C.

Dame Roddick contracted hepatitis C through a blood transfusion that she received in 1971 as a result of complications she experienced during the birth of her youngest daughter. She was diagnosed with the virus in 2004, 33 years later. Since then, she has become a vocal campaigner for greater public awareness of the often misunderstood illness and eventually become head of the Hepatitis C Trust in Britain.

"It was a remarkable feat of courage to be the public face of what has to be one of the most-misunderstood diseases in the world. Dame Roddick brought people's attention to the simple home truth that hepatitis C is not limited to a small group of people but is something that can affect anyone from any walk of life," says Helen McNeill, Executive Officer of Hepatitis C Council Victoria.

"We can only hope that other people in the public eye who have hep C can learn from Dame Roddick's example and reduce the stigma associated with hepatitis C by coming out with their own stories."

Dame Roddick died of a major brain haemorrhage on Tuesday morning. Although she was suffering cirrhosis of the liver as a result of hepatitis C at the time, hepatitis C is not thought to have played a role in her death.

Since 1990, Australian blood banks have begun testing for the hepatitis C virus. The risk of contracting hepatitis C through blood transfusion is now thought to be extremely low.

About hepatitis C

Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus that can cause inflammation of the liver. It is estimated that 10,000 new infections of hepatitis C will occur in the coming year in Australia. Hepatitis C directly affects an estimated 75,000 Victorians and 250,000 Australians including many who are not aware that they carry the virus.

About Hepatitis C Council of Victoria

The Hepatitis C Council of Victoria is the peak community organisation in Victoria representing people with or at risk of hepatitis C. The Council seeks to prevent the spread of hepatitis C and improve the lives of people with hepatitis C through support, advocacy, education and consultation.