

Embargo 8pm EST Saturday 31 October

This is hepatitis...

World Hepatitis Alliance launches new campaign to tell the story of
500 million people worldwide

Boston, Massachusetts, Saturday 31 October 2009 – The World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) today launched a new two-year campaign theme ‘**This is hepatitis...**’ for World Hepatitis Day 2010 and 2011, at the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) congress in Boston, Massachusetts.

‘**This is hepatitis...**’ tells the real-life stories of the effect that hepatitis B and C have on the lives of the 500 million people affected worldwide.¹ The campaign focuses on the physical and emotional impact of viral hepatitis, but also aims to empower those living with the diseases through the sharing of inspirational stories.

The WHA has launched the campaign to generate increased understanding and help destigmatise two diseases that kill over one million people every year¹. The campaign has been specifically designed to allow national patient groups to adapt it and develop their own awareness raising programmes that educate the general public, create unity, engage policy makers and reinforce the scale of the problem.

Since its launch in 2008, World Hepatitis Day has used the theme of ‘Am I Number 12?’ to raise awareness of the global incidence of hepatitis B and C, as collectively the diseases affect one in 12 people worldwide. As a new theme, ‘**This is hepatitis...**’ will sit underneath the umbrella ‘Am I Number 12?’ campaign, and over the next two years will communicate four key messages:

- **Prevention:** ‘*Get Protected*’ – knowing the risk factors for hepatitis B and C is the most important step in preventing new infections

World Hepatitis Alliance

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- **Diagnosis:** *'Get Tested'* – getting tested for hepatitis B and C is quick and simple, and if people think they might be at risk, they should get tested immediately
- **Protection:** *'Get Vaccinated'* – in the case of hepatitis B there is a vaccine and the disease is preventable through immunisation
- **Treatment:** *'Get Treated'* – in many cases, treatment for hepatitis B and C is effective

“Ignorance and confusion around hepatitis B and C is still far too common, and I know from my personal experience, the challenges that people living with viral hepatitis face on a day-to-day basis” explained Charles Gore, President of the World Hepatitis Alliance. “The World Hepatitis Alliance is launching the *'This is hepatitis...'* campaign in the hope that patients will feel empowered to speak out about their own experiences and to help educate and support others.”

Increased understanding and education among the global community is an essential first step in reducing the significant number of people being newly infected with hepatitis B and C every year as well as delivering the ultimate goal of eradicating these devastating diseases. The WHA has developed thought-provoking campaign materials to promote the new theme, which will be available to patient groups as part of their preparations for World Hepatitis Day 2010. New campaign materials will again be translated into seven languages; Arabic, English, French, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

Chronic viral hepatitis B and C affects one in 12 people worldwide and approximately one person dies every 30 seconds - meaning that one million people die each year from these diseases. Globally, around 500 million people are currently infected with hepatitis B or C¹, and most don't even know they are infected. This is over 10 times the number infected with HIV/AIDS².

Wednesday 19 May 2010 marks the third World Hepatitis Day, and to date over 200 patient groups from more than 60 countries across the globe have supported the World Hepatitis Alliance campaign.

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The World Hepatitis Alliance provides global leadership and supports action that will halt the death toll and improve the lives of people living with chronic viral hepatitis B and C. Through better awareness, prevention, care, support and access to treatment, our ultimate goal is to work with governments to eradicate these diseases from the planet.

The World Hepatitis Alliance is a Non-Governmental Organisation representing more than 200 hepatitis B and C patient groups from around the world. The World Hepatitis Alliance is governed by a representative board elected by patient groups from seven world regions: Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Africa, North America, Latin America, Australasia and Western Pacific. For further information visit: www.worldhepatitisday.org

World Hepatitis Alliance – Seeking a world without viral hepatitis B and C.

World Hepatitis Day

The third annual World Hepatitis Day will take place on Wednesday 19 May 2010, as part of an ongoing campaign launched by the World Hepatitis Alliance in 2008. An entirely patient-led initiative, World Hepatitis Day aims to raise awareness of hepatitis B and C, as well as extend the political support for the diseases to levels seen in HIV / AIDS, TB and malaria. The long-term objective of the World Hepatitis Day campaign is to prevent new infections and to deliver real improvements in health outcomes for people living with hepatitis B and C.

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References

¹World Health Organization. Viral hepatitis: Report by the Secretariat. http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/A62/A62_22-en.pdf (accessed May 11, 2009)

²World Health Organization. Global summary of the AIDS epidemic. http://www.who.int/hiv/data/2008_global_summary_AIDS_ep.png (accessed May 11, 2009)

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