

Press Release

World Hepatitis Alliance Welcomes New Global Framework Aimed at Saving the Lives of Millions Living With Hepatitis

Alliance calls on governments to support the WHO strategy by setting regional targets to eradicate this killer disease

Switzerland, Geneva. Wednesday 25th July, 2012 – The World Hepatitis Alliance have today welcomed the launch of the World Health Organization (WHO) framework for hepatitis as the global patient community marks World Hepatitis Day. ‘*Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis Infection: Framework for Global Action*’ⁱ, provides a global vision for the prevention and control of viral hepatitis and outlines four axes for action for regions and countries to develop effective strategies and plans according to their specific hepatitis burden and challenges.

“Hepatitis is closer than you think, with approximately 1 in 12 people living with either hepatitis B or C globally,” said Charles Gore, President of the Alliance. “The launch of the WHO Framework is an essential step in the fight against this global epidemic.”

The launch of the Framework comes two years after the agreement of a historic World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution on viral hepatitis (WHA63.18) which for the first time described what is expected of governments to deliver improvements in awareness, surveillance, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis. In line with this resolution, the WHO Secretariat established a Global Hepatitis Programme within its Department of Pandemic and Epidemic Diseases, with focal points in the six Regional Offices, to implement the resolution and attain the goals outlined in the new Framework.

Continues Mr. Gore: “With the WHA resolution, and now the WHO Framework for Action, we are gaining momentum in the fight against hepatitis but more must be done to raise awareness of this

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killer disease. The challenge for governments now is to action this new Framework. It is critical that specific targets are set at a regional level to ensure measurable results.”

World Hepatitis Day provides an opportunity for communities all around the world to join together to raise awareness of hepatitis and importantly promote actions to confront it. To mark World Hepatitis Day 2012 the Alliance has launched a global effort to attempt a Guinness World Record highlighting the huge under-diagnosis of hepatitis. The aim is to have the most people performing the “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” actions in 24 hours at multiple venues around the world. Countries participating in the record attempt include: Germany, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Malaysia, India, Romania, China, Ukraine, Canada United States and Japan. There is also a See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil twitter campaign (#seehearspeakno) which encourages people to tweet a picture of themselves performing one of the three gestures (or a group of three people performing all three), with the photo being added to a growing online photography album.

Approximately 500 million people are living with either hepatitis B or hepatitis C worldwide. If left untreated and unmanaged, hepatitis B or C can lead to advanced liver scarring (cirrhosis) and other complications, including liver cancer or liver failure. Together, hepatitis B and C kill approximately one million people every year.

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World Hepatitis Alliance

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.

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The World Hepatitis Alliance is a Non-Governmental Organisation with over 140 member patient organisations in more than 60 countries. The World Hepatitis Alliance is governed by a board consisting entirely of hepatitis B or C patients and elected by patient groups from the six WHO world regions: Africa, the Americas, Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, South-East Asia and Western Pacific. For further information visit: www.worldhepatitisalliance.org

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

World Hepatitis Day

On 28 July 2012, the World Hepatitis Alliance will coordinate the fifth global World Hepatitis Day. World Hepatitis Day is one of only four official world disease awareness days endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and its 194 member states. The aim for 2012 is to continue to raise awareness of chronic hepatitis B and C around the globe and to drive policy change for improvements in health outcomes for patients through the campaign '**This is hepatitis... it's closer than you think**'. The theme builds on the previous year's campaign theme '**This is hepatitis... Know it. Confront it. Hepatitis affects everyone, everywhere.**'

References

ⁱ World Health Organization. *Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis Infection: Framework for Global Action*. Published July 2012. Available at: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/hepatitis/Framework/en/index.html>