The Global Impact of Viral Hepatitis

Viral hepatitis is a growing global public health problem, causing serious illness and death from acute hepatitis infection, liver cancer and liver cirrhosis.

Globally/worldwide:
- 1.5 million people die every year as a result of viral hepatitis
- Viral hepatitis is the 7th leading cause of death worldwide, killing more than HIV/AIDS every year.
- 350,000 people have been infected with HBV
- 150 million are chronically infected with HBV (and at risk of serious illness and death from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma)
- 700,000 people die from HBV-related diseases each year.
- 500 million people are chronically infected with HCV
- 2 billion people are chronically infected with HCV
- 240 million people die from HCV-related liver diseases each year.

Support:
- Support, in the context of support groups, involves activities that help and inform its members.
- Support groups are defined as: In a support group, members provide each other with various types of help, usually nonprofessional and nonmaterial, for a particular shared, usually burdensome, characteristic. Members with the same issues can come together for sharing coping strategies, to feel more empowered and for a sense of community. The help may take the form of providing and evaluating relevant information, relating personal experiences, listening to and accepting others’ experiences, providing sympathetic understanding and establishing social networks. A support group may also work to inform the public or engage in advocacy.

Advocacy:
- The concept of advocacy typically describes a political process or series of actions by an individual or group, which aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions. Advocacy activities include media campaigns, public speaking, and commissioning and publishing research or providing expert witness as part of legal process and lobbying.

Advocacy aims to help by:
- Promoting people’s rights and helping them maintain control over their own lives
- Promoting social inclusion and raising awareness of the obstacles faced by excluded and isolated individuals
- Involving and empowering people to speak for themselves and for people who are unable to speak for themselves
- Helping people to explore the range of options open to them and clarify a particular course of action

Advocacy actions:
- Question the way policy is formed and administered
- Participate in agenda setting as they raise significant issues
- Target political systems where they are not responding to people’s needs
- Are inclusive and engaging
- Propose policy solutions
- Open up space for public debate

Support range:
- Telephone help lines/web-based support services
- Information giving
- Training
- Awareness raising
- Countering discrimination & stigma
- Working with marginalized groups that might avoid healthcare settings