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.

- 240 million people are chronically infected with HBV.
- 500,000–700,000 people die from HBV-related diseases each year.
- 150 million people are chronically infected with HCV.
- 350,000+ people die from HCV-related liver diseases each year.
- 500 million people have been infected with HBV.
- 2 billion people are at risk of serious illness and death (from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma).

Stigma is a hugely negative influence and countering it is vital in tackling viral hepatitis. The end result of this is often social isolation and further negative effects on mental health. Stigma can often be internalized ('self-stigma'), causing people to be ashamed and worried about their condition.

Reducing Stigma & Isolation

Negative impacts of stigma include:
- Reduced dignity and self-esteem
- Anxiety and depression
- Effects on access to employment and housing
- Damaged social relationships
- Lack of engagement with treatment and support services
- People less likely to come forward for testing
- Lack of influence on how services are designed and delivered
- Abuse of human rights

Patient groups help to defeat stigma

They achieve this by:
- Providing group members, with accurate, evidence-based information and knowledge
- Being a reliable source of accurate and credible information
- Making people with viral hepatitis a more visible presence in the community
- Countering myth and prejudice
- Providing the media with real stories that people can relate to

Stigma is a common experience for people with viral hepatitis:
- It is always negative
- It can be effectively countered with credible information and knowledge
- Countering stigma is hugely beneficial both to people with viral hepatitis and to society
- People who don’t experience stigma are more likely to be in contact with testing and treatment