WHA welcomes new members

WHA and UNITE partner to combat viral hepatitis

hepinion: Global funders must join the fight for hepatitis elimination

WALL OF STORIES

“Being a survivor, it is now my duty to protect future generations.”
Note from our CEO

Welcome to hepVoice. It has been an exciting couple of months for the World Hepatitis Alliance and the global hepatitis community. In September I attended the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Thanks to advocacy led by WHA viral hepatitis was included in the UHC Political Declaration signed at the meeting. Civil society will now play a crucial role in advocating for countries to make hepatitis elimination a cornerstone of their UHC responses. Read more on page 10.

Service integration will be key for countries in their UHC responses. This month WHA gathered support for an open letter to the Global Fund to urge the proactive exploration of areas in which hepatitis programmes can be integrated with existing HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria programmes. The Letter, signed by over 800 people, was sent to the Global Fund on the eve of their replenishment meeting in Lyon where they raised US$14 billion for the fight against HIV, malaria and tuberculosis. You can read more about our campaign on page 11.

Partnerships will be another cornerstone of UHC. Working together we can achieve more, and to that end WHA is delighted to announce partnerships with UNITE, the global policymakers network, and IAPAC, the organisers of Fast-Track Cities. These partnerships will help to accelerate hepatitis elimination; you can read more about them on pages 8 and 14.

You may have noticed that hepVoice has had a small makeover. Last month we asked for your feedback on how we could improve the magazine and I would like to thank you for all the comments that you gave us. We have decided that we will be running the magazine in a similar format for the remainder of 2019 whilst we make exciting changes to how you receive hepVoice in the future as we look to make it accessible on different platforms and in different languages.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this issue of hepVoice.

Cary James
Almost 100,000 people in UK unaware they are living with hepatitis

Public Health England (PHE) have announced that tens of thousands of people in the UK are unaware they are living with hepatitis C.

Data from 2018 showed that around 143,000 people in the UK were living with the virus. However, up to 95,600 people may be unaware they have it, preventing them from seeking treatment.

People who believe they may have been at risk of contracting hepatitis C are being advised to take a quiz on the Hepatitis C Trust website to find out if they should be tested. PHE is especially urging anyone who has ever injected drugs to take the quiz.

Dr Helen Harris, Senior Scientist at PHE, said, “Anyone who may be at risk of infection, in particular those who have ever injected drugs, even if they injected only once or twice in the past, should get tested. Given that new treatments provide a cure in around 95 per cent of those who take them, there has never been a better time to get tested.”

Click here to read more.

Chinese Taipei (Taiwan) sets target to eliminate hepatitis by 2025

The Executive Yuan (the executive branch of the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan), has announced their goal of eliminating hepatitis as a health threat by 2025.

In total, 9,538 people were cured by this drug in 2017, and a further 20,000 people were cured after the government increased subsidies for the drug.

Click here to read more.

Hepatitis B identified as a growing health challenge in Upper Dolpa, Nepal

Over 20 per cent of people who attended a health camp in one of Nepal’s 77 districts have been diagnosed with hepatitis B. More than 300 people visited the health camp in Dolpo Buddha Rural Municipality, where 70 people were diagnosed with the virus.

“One in four people is likely to be found positive with hepatitis B in Upper Dolpa”, said Dr Sudhamshu KC, a senior liver disease specialist at Bir Hospital in Kathmandu. He added that the situation is only likely to worsen if timely interventions are not carried out.

Dr KC also noted that the increase in hepatitis B cases can be explained in part by a lack of hepatitis B vaccination for infants.

Click here to read more.

Dates for the Diary

Upcoming events and activities taking place in the coming months.

8 – 12 NOVEMBER
The Liver Meeting, Boston, USA
The Liver Meeting® is the American Association for the Study of the Liver’s (AASLD) annual event, which brings together 9,500 attendees from around the world to exchange the latest hepatological research, discuss new developments in treatment outcomes, and network with other experts in the field. Find out more here.

19 NOVEMBER
World Toilet Day
The theme of World Toilet Day 2019 is “Leave no one behind”. Access to adequate sanitation is key to avoiding the spread of hepatitis A and E. Find out more here and join in the conversation using #WorldToiletDay.

1 DECEMBER
World AIDS Day
World AIDS Day is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV and to show support for people living with HIV. More than five million people living with HIV also have hepatitis B or C, so it’s important to come together and tackle these epidemics together. Find out more here and join in the conversation using #WorldAIDSDay.
Coalition to Eradicate Viral Hepatitis in Asia Pacific Ltd (CEVHAP)

Based in Singapore, CEVHAP has previously worked with WHA. A member organisation in their own right, they bring together the collective knowledge and expertise of their membership in their advocacy efforts, education and knowledge building and policy research to help build national action plans. Follow them on Facebook [here](#) and Twitter [here](#).

Health and Development Initiative

The Health and Development Initiative is our second member in Gambia. They use the first six Sustainable Development Goals as the basis of their constitution to improve healthcare across their country, performing community outreach and sensitisation activities, and referring people for vaccinations. They also celebrate World Hepatitis Day each year. Follow them on Facebook [here](#) and Twitter [here](#).

Great Lakes Peace Center

The Great Lakes Peace Center is based in Uganda. They are a youth-led organisation promoting peace through youth empowerment, and have a range of priorities including hepatitis elimination. They carry out hepatitis awareness-raising activities within their local community. You can follow them on Facebook [here](#) and Twitter [here](#).

MED Charitable Trust

MED Charitable Trust’s core activities include awareness-raising, free screening camps and counselling services for both patients and their families. Based in India, their mission and vision sets out their aim to act as the conduit between the scientific community and patients, ensuring patients are correctly informed throughout their journey from diagnosis to clearing their hepatitis C infection. They also carry out scientific research in order to fill data gaps.

Zemma Awareness Initiative

Nigerian-based Zemma Awareness Initiative conduct community awareness programmes and hold screening camps for both hepatitis B and C. They recently vaccinated over 200 people in their community, whilst also carrying out awareness-raising activities. They are already members of the Viral Hepatitis Association of Nigeria. You can follow them on Facebook [here](#).

International Network on Hepatitis in Substance Users (INHSU)

INHSU is a non-profit based in Switzerland. They are a membership organisation comprised of clinicians, research experts and other global stakeholders. They have previously partnered and collaborated with WHA. Follow them on Facebook [here](#) and Twitter [here](#).

TB HIV Care

Originally an HIV-focussed non-profit, TB HIV Care expanded to include viral hepatitis in their remit four years ago. Based in South Africa, they run ongoing programmes for people who use drugs. They have taken an active role in advocating for and supporting the development of an improved national response to hepatitis, and recently led on a cross-sectional viral hepatitis prevalence survey in key populations. Follow them on Facebook [here](#) and Twitter [here](#).

Sufabel Community Development Initiative

Sufabel is based in Nigeria. Their activities include advocacy, training, awareness-raising and capacity-building. They have also taken part in several World Hepatitis Days. You can follow them on Facebook [here](#).

Croatian Association for HIV and viral Hepatitis (CAHIV)

CAHIV’s work centres on tackling both HIV and viral hepatitis in Croatia. In 2013 they founded CheckPoint Zagreb, offering free and anonymous testing for blood borne viruses. Along with the Ministry of Health in Croatia, they organise and provide psychosocial support services for those living with viral hepatitis too. They also work with medical professionals and have developed a mobile app about hepatitis, and organise educational symposiums. You can follow them on Facebook [here](#).
WHA and UNITE partner to combat viral hepatitis

The World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) and UNITE, the global parliamentarians network to end HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis and other infectious diseases, announced a new partnership in September, ahead of the United Nations (UN) High Level Meeting (HLM) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The two organisations collaborated with other stakeholders to successfully advocate for the inclusion of viral hepatitis within the UN Political Declaration on UHC which was adopted at the HLM on UHC. The President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili, also made specific mention of hepatitis in her address to the HLM, highlighting Georgia’s progress towards the elimination of viral hepatitis.

“UNITE is delighted to be working with the World Hepatitis Alliance,” said UNITE founder and president and civil society have the tools and knowledge they need to have an effective relationship. In doing so, we can help strengthen health systems and ensure that the patient voice is represented at all levels of health policy development.”

The two organisations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, confirming their commitment to working together in joint advocacy, awareness-raising, accountability promotion, political will mobilisation and political leadership support to achieve the elimination of viral hepatitis by 2030.

About UNITE

Created under the auspicious of UNAIDS, UNITE is a non-profit, non-partisan, global network of current and former policymakers from state, national and regional parliaments committed towards the elimination of HIV/AIDS, viral Hepatitis and other infectious diseases as public health threats by 2030.

Dr Ricardo Baptista Leite, MD, MP, “Parliamentarians have an important role to play in hepatitis elimination. By working together with the World Hepatitis Alliance, we empower a network of parliamentarians to make a real difference. Our recent success in advocating for the inclusion of viral hepatitis in the Universal Health Coverage Political Declaration is a great start to our partnership.”

World Hepatitis Alliance CEO, Cary James, added: “This partnership with UNITE will help us to work with policy makers at the highest levels to make a real difference. We will also work to ensure that policy makers...”

“Yet another great example of universality is the hepatitis C elimination programme launched in 2015 by the Georgian government with the support of the US CDC, Gilead sciences, the WHO and other partners, creating the first ever precedent of a nationwide eradication of a chronic illness by treatment.”
Universal Health Coverage: what it means for hepatitis

- by Cary James, WHA CEO

On Monday 23 September I attended the United Nations (UN) High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in New York to represent WHA members.

It was heartening to hear hepatitis mentioned in addresses from the President of Georgia, the President of Egypt, and the Prime Minister of Bhutan at this prestigious event. I was also delighted to see that Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, has been awarded the Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunisations (GAVI) Vaccine Hero award in recognition of Bangladesh’s outstanding success in vaccinating children against diseases, including hepatitis B.

These recent events indicate that hepatitis elimination is becoming more of a priority in countries around the world. It is thanks to the tireless work of WHA members and the global hepatitis community that hepatitis is increasingly prominent on the world stage. We now need to ensure that this is translated to the country level.

Recently, WHA advocated successfully for hepatitis to be included in the Political Declaration on UHC which was signed by world leaders at the High Level Meeting. This is the start of an increasing focus on UHC in the coming months and years, and it is vital that we keep hepatitis high on the UHC agenda.

To help you understand UHC, how it relates to hepatitis, and what you can do to help ensure this new commitment to hepatitis elimination is turned into action, we have put together a short briefing on UHC. I also hosted a live broadcast on UHC and hepatitis which you can catch up on here.

WHA and UNITE host side meeting at UN High Level Meeting on UHC

In collaboration with UNAIDS and the G20 Health & Development Partnership, WHA and UNITE hosted a side meeting the day before the high level meeting on UHC.

Entitled “Securing political leadership and innovative funding to achieve Universal Health Coverage”, the interactive roundtable explored how policymakers, civil society and other agencies can effectively collaborate to ensure health systems secure funding and meet the needs of the people.

NOhep campaign urging Global Fund to join fight against hepatitis attracts widespread support

More than 800 individuals and organisations joined NOhep’s call for the Global Fund to prioritise and proactively support the integration of viral hepatitis with their existing HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria programmes.

Our open letter was sent to the board of the Global Fund on the eve of its sixth replenishment meeting, held in Lyon, France on 9-10 October.

An extract from NOhep’s letter to the Global Fund

“We urge the Global Fund to prioritise and proactively support the integration of viral hepatitis within existing HIV, TB and malaria programmes and respectfully call on all development partners and donors to join the fight for viral hepatitis elimination. By working together we will achieve hepatitis elimination and avert over 7 million deaths by 2030.

The Global Fund replenishment campaign ‘Step up the Fight’ is asking people to make a pledge to the 7-year-olds of today, promising the elimination of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria by the time they turn 18. With your support, we can offer them a world free of hepatitis as well.

We are the first generation that can eliminate this global killer. Let’s not be the first generation that didn’t take up the fight.”

Read the full letter and view its signatories on the NOhep website
Earlier this month, the Global Fund met for its sixth replenishment meeting in Lyon, France, where it achieved its ambitious fundraising target of US$14 billion to fight AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria. The replenishment meeting saw record pledges from countries, and huge contributions from private foundations. It is heartening to see the level of dedication countries and private sector donors have to fighting disease epidemics – after all the Global Fund aims to save 16 million lives with the money raised in Lyon. However it is frustrating to see viral hepatitis repeatedly excluded from funding opportunities, despite claiming more lives each year than HIV or malaria, and a number comparable to TB.

“I find it incomprehensible that there is not greater commitment from funders and development partners to tackle [hepatitis].”

Due to this lack of funding we are asking low- and middle- income countries without the resources needed to eliminate hepatitis to tackle one of the largest health crises in history alone.

To combat this, just ahead of the replenishment meeting, I and almost 1,000 others joined the NOhep movement’s call for the Global Fund to proactively support the integration of viral hepatitis within its existing programmes.

Viral hepatitis can be effectively integrated into many existing HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria programmes. Viral hepatitis affects similar key populations, the molecular diagnostic systems used for TB and HIV can be used to detect viral hepatitis, and the same generic drug (Tenofovir) is used to treat HIV and hepatitis B. If the Global Fund supports our request we can help build a more efficient, sustainable, and impactful response to all four diseases. Most importantly this will benefit the patients who currently have to navigate the inequity in the health system.

If major global funders and development partners hear our call, join the fight for hepatitis elimination, and seize the opportunity to tackle these major health crises together, we will achieve hepatitis elimination and avert over 7 million deaths by 2030. But if nothing is done, by 2040 hepatitis will kill more people than HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria combined.

If this is allowed to happen, then international commitments to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.3 will be completely undermined. Both the UN’s Political Declaration on UHC, which was signed just a few weeks ago at the UN High Level meeting on UHC, and goal 3.3 of the SDGs include explicit commitments to hepatitis. While political will is of course to be welcomed, it means nothing if it is not backed up with the funding or strategies to turn will into reality.
WHA and IAPAC announce Fast-Track Cities Partnership

The World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) and the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC) announced a new partnership on the first day of the Fast-Track Cities 2019 conference in London. The conference convened more than 750 delegates from a network of more than 300 Fast-Track Cities striving to end urban HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and viral hepatitis (HBV and HCV) epidemics.

“Our partnership with the World Hepatitis Alliance will support Fast-Track Cities in addressing the public health threat posed by HBV and HCV,” said IAPAC President/CEO Dr. José M. Zuniga. “In the era of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, we have an obligation to work with our colleagues across health conditions. We are honored to formally join with the World Hepatitis Alliance to reach our mutual goal of ending hepatitis-related deaths among people living with HIV and, ultimately, achieving HBV and HCV elimination.”

World Hepatitis Alliance CEO Cary James signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) alongside IAPAC’s Dr. Zuniga during a ceremony at the Fast-Track Cities 2019 conference at the Barbican Centre in London.

“We are excited to join with the Fast-Track Cities initiative to accelerate and strengthen cities’ responses to viral hepatitis, a disease which claims 1.4 million lives each year,” said WHA’s Cary James. “We have the tools needed to eliminate viral hepatitis, but a key challenge is finding the 290 million people who are unaware that they are living with the virus. Scaling up diagnoses will be the cornerstone to cities’ hepatitis responses. If we find the missing millions and link them to treatment, we can eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030.”

The MOU affirms a commitment between IAPAC and the World Hepatitis Alliance to joint advocacy, awareness-raising, capacity-building, and other activities in support of the goal of eliminating hepatitis B and hepatitis C by 2030.

“"We have the tools needed to eliminate viral hepatitis, but a key challenge is finding the 290 million people who are unaware that they are living with the virus."
Wall of Stories

Surender Kumar

Together, our stories can change the way the world sees viral hepatitis. The stories of those living with or impacted by viral hepatitis can help educate and raise awareness, provide support and inspiration, tackle stigma and discrimination, and highlight the true impact of this global disease.

Each month we share the story of someone whose life has been affected by viral hepatitis. This month, we hear from Surender Kumar from India.

Click here to learn more about RANN Foundation

“I never hide my hepatitis B positive status; in fact I share my story whenever I can.”

Misconceptions and stigma attached to the disease often lead to discrimination and marginalisation of people living with the chronic infection, which is a major concern and has a big impact on the lives of patients in India.

My fight against the disease focuses on multiple fronts: preventing hepatitis B through vaccination camps for children who have dropped out of school, conducting education programmes on viral hepatitis in schools and urban slums, and providing psychosocial support to patients.

With around 1.5 lakh (150,000) deaths annually and almost 60 million Indians affected, viral hepatitis continues to be a serious public health concern.

See more stories and submit your own at www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/wall-stories