NOhep: NOEXCUSE

What’s your excuse?

Eliminating mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B

Working together towards elimination

WHD 2017 Theme launched
The theme of elimination is here to stay. This month we’ve seen it take centre stage at many meetings such as APASL, where we highlighted the importance of working together to achieve elimination. Here in London, the WHA team used key global awareness days to raise mass awareness of viral hepatitis and supported the launch of an exciting new campaign from NOhep. We were also delighted to bring our members the first WHA Members’ webinar that featured an exclusive update on World Hepatitis Day 2017. And while we continued to push the viral hepatitis agenda forward it was brought to our attention that the latest WHO guidelines on antenatal care (launched in the end of last year) do not mention hepatitis B. This is an egregious error of judgement. Hepatitis B infection in a pregnant woman poses a serious risk to her infant. Transmission of this cancer-causing virus can be prevented if a vaccine is administered to the baby within 24h of birth. We will advocate for the inclusion of hepatitis B in this important WHO document and will keep you updated on any news! For all this and more, read on!

Raquel Peck
Chief Executive Officer
World Hepatitis Alliance

Want to contribute?
We welcome your contributions so please get in touch at contact@worldhepatitisalliance.org to have your news included in future issues and feel free to share the magazine with your network.
Where in the World...

Elimination Through Partnerships: NGOs call for collaboration to achieve elimination

Shanghai, China

At the 26th Conference of the Asian Pacific Association for the Study of the Liver (APASL), the World Hepatitis Alliance joined forces with the Coalition to Eradicate Viral Hepatitis in Asia Pacific (CEVHAP) and key patient organisations in the region to highlight the importance of, and existing good practice in, joint working between NGOs and healthcare professionals to advance elimination. On 15 February, APASL, CEVHAP, the Chinese Foundation on Hepatitis Prevention and Control and WHA hosted a forum entitled “Elimination Through Partnerships: Towards a World with NOhep”. The forum addressed the barriers to elimination, featuring case studies from the region and WHA President Charles Gore facilitated a workshop on financing. In the final panel of the day, Charles called for more concerted advocacy arguing that financing for hepatitis will simply not materialise in a world of many competing priorities. Findings from the forum were presented in a report back session on 18 February where Charles also gave a talk on NOhep within the context of healthcare professionals working with NGOs and announced a forthcoming WHA award for the HCPs doing the most to advance the cause of elimination by working with NGOs.

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Want to hear the key findings from the forum? Watch the summary of discussions here.

World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Viral Hepatitis

Alaska, United States

Viral hepatitis disproportionately affects Indigenous populations, yet the issue is entirely neglected. Following the success of the inaugural World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Viral Hepatitis in Alice Springs, Australia in 2014, we are delighted to announce that the second conference will take place in Anchorage, Alaska, USA. The event will be held 8-9 August to coincide with International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. It will bring together Indigenous peoples, policy makers and experts in the field to profile and further the conversation on viral hepatitis in Indigenous communities, and crucially give Indigenous peoples a voice.

Watch WHA CEO Raquel Peck explain the importance of this event here.

For more information, visit the World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference on Viral Hepatitis website.
WHO CONSULTATION ON TRIPLE ELIMINATION OF MOTHER TO CHILD TRANSMISSION OF HIV, SYPHILIS AND HBV

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

On 20-21 February WHA attended a two day event organised by WHO WPRO (also with SEARO representation) looking at the feasibility of integrating triple elimination of hepatitis B, syphilis and HIV into maternal and child health. The expert consultation group unanimously endorsed the concept of triple elimination of mother-to-child transmission and encouraged the development of an integrated regional framework that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals and WHO’s viral hepatitis elimination strategy. Throughout the meeting, experts stressed the need for strong high level political commitment to ensure an integrated and coordinated approach.

HEPATITIS B OMITTED FROM WHO RECOMMENDATIONS ON ANTENATAL CARE FOR A POSITIVE PREGNANCY EXPERIENCE

Despite some positive advancements towards elimination of mother-to-child transmission, WHA were extremely disappointed to learn that this commitment is not reflected throughout WHO’s work. In November 2016, WHO launched their Recommendations on antenatal care for a positive pregnancy experience and despite mother-to-child transmission being one of the major routes of transmission for hepatitis B, the virus and strategies to address it were not mentioned once. This signals a disconnect with WHO’s viral hepatitis elimination strategy that recognises one of the key targets as an increase of the hepatitis B birth dose vaccination rate from the current 38% to 90% by 2030. To reach this target, promotion of the hepatitis B birth dose vaccine will be key throughout antenatal guidelines. We will advocate for this document to be reviewed ASAP.
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “The right to health includes access to timely, acceptable, and affordable health care of appropriate quality”, yet for 99% of people living with viral hepatitis, this basic right is being denied.

On 20 February, World Day of Social Justice presented an opportunity for WHA and its members across the globe to stand up and remind governments that health is a human right. Access to medicines is a key concern for all of us who fight for social justice, and to aggravate the matter even further, there are other pressing concerns which are further stripping away our global community’s right to health. These are the general lack of awareness about the disease and the stigma and discrimination suffered by so many. To find out more about our call on World Day of Social Justice, click here.

Also, to coincide with World Day of Social Justice, we launched a new resources hub that looks at the access landscape in viral hepatitis. We hope you find it useful! Check it out here.

People living with viral hepatitis are subject to stigma and discrimination in almost every aspect of their lives. Fear and ignorance have robbed people of their jobs, education opportunities, friendships and relationships. Consequently, as many as 1 in 3 people living with viral hepatitis are afraid to tell their friends and families.

On Zero Discrimination Day the World Hepatitis Alliance called for an end to the stigma and discrimination that the 400 million people living with viral hepatitis suffer from every day. Find out more and hear the extreme measures one hepatitis B carrier was forced to take to secure a job here.

To coincide with Zero Discrimination Day, NOhep has launched the NOhep:NOEXCUSE pledge campaign, a year-round advocacy and awareness-raising activity calling on policymakers, medical professionals and the general public to stop making excuses and pledge simple actions to help eliminate viral hepatitis.

Today NOhep asks you to send a powerful message to your community that there’s NO EXCUSE for discrimination and there’s NO EXCUSE: viral hepatitis can be eliminated. Here are a few simple ways on how you can get involved with the campaign:

- Add your pledge here
- Share the campaign’s images on your social media profiles, and encourage your followers to add their name to the pledgemall – don’t forget to use #NOhep!
- Use the pledge for advocacy by sending the link to your policymaker
New and innovative ideas and concepts will be key to achieving the elimination of viral hepatitis so this year, the World Hepatitis Summit welcomes the submission of work that introduces original research and understanding to the field of viral hepatitis. The Summit has launched three categories under which you can submit work for consideration:

- Interventions for Impact
- Delivering for Equity
- Innovation for Acceleration

These categories are aligned with Strategic Directions 2, 3 and 5 of the Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis.

Submissions are now open and will close 1 May 2017.

A small number of scholarships will be offered to presenting authors of successful submissions – these will include financial support towards travel and accommodation.

Submissions will be accepted via the World Hepatitis Summit website here.
To tackle low levels of awareness and help fight stigma, this month WHA Member the National Organisation for People Living with Hepatitis B (NOPLHB) organised a viral hepatitis training for health workers in the Gulu District. Professor Ponsiano Ocama and Kenneth Kabagambe (WHA board member for the Africa Region) carried out the training that looked at management of both the hepatitis B and C viruses.

Throughout the month of February, WHA member Climbing for Carleen has strived to spread the elimination message. Their activities have included everything from awareness-raising mountain hikes to meetings in Washington DC.

We love to highlight the great work of our members, so get in touch with updates on your national activities.