

HEP VOICE

The Magazine

Issue 66

August - December
2024



World Hepatitis Testing Week

Advancing Advocacy:
CIP Accelerator Programme

The Overlooked Link Between
Mental Health and Hepatitis

Expanding Our Reach:
New WHA Members

Stepping Up PMTCT
Prevention in Senegal



Your online magazine from the World Hepatitis Alliance

WELCOME TO HEP VOICE!



As we close out the year, I find myself reflecting on the remarkable efforts of our global hepatitis community. This has been a year of intensified advocacy, with a renewed sense of urgency driving action. From the World Hepatitis Day theme, “It’s Time for Action” to the World Hepatitis Summit’s call to “Integrate, Accelerate, and Eliminate”, these messages resonate even more strongly as we approach the pivotal moment of reviewing progress towards the WHO 2030 elimination goals in 2025.

Ending the year with the first-ever World Hepatitis Testing Week feels particularly significant. Testing remains a cornerstone in elimination efforts, since most people living with viral hepatitis are still undiagnosed. Without diagnosis, we cannot prevent transmission, provide treatment, and achieve elimination. Turn to page 10 to read about the incredible initiatives across the globe to ramp up testing.

Looking ahead to 2025, we will deepen our focus on key areas, including liver cancer (see page 8), preventing mother-to-child-transmission and addressing mental health, stigma, and discrimination (see page 20). Recognising the vital role of advocacy, we aim to further strengthen our CIP Accelerator Programme, empowering the next generation of advocates to drive change. Learn more about its impact so far on page 18.

As we edge closer to our elimination goal, collaboration has never been more important. Thank you for being part of our journey. Together, we can build a future free from viral hepatitis.

Cary James, WHA Chief Executive

CONTENTS

04

Dates for your diary

06

Hep Headlines

08

Event reports

10

World Hepatitis Testing Week

18

The CIP Accelerator Programme

20

NOhep Medical Visionaries Forum at INHSU 2024

22

Welcoming new members to WHA

24

Hep Voices Karen’s Story

Want to share a feature for Hep Voice?

Share your news or story by emailing contact@worldhepatitisalliance.org

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Indian Hepatitis Summit

17 – 18 January

India ranks second globally for viral hepatitis burden. To address gaps in awareness, access to care, and health infrastructure, the Chennai Liver Foundation, in collaboration with the World Hepatitis Alliance, are hosting the Indian Hepatitis Summit 2025. Guided by the vision, “Accelerating India’s Commitment to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis Before 2030,” the summit will unite leading experts, global organisations, and key stakeholders to drive awareness and implement innovative strategies to combat the rising incidence of viral hepatitis in India. Register [here](#).

World Cancer Day

4 February

Behind every cancer diagnosis is a unique story of grief, pain, resilience, love, and healing. This World Cancer Day, the theme “United by Unique” puts people at the centre of care and their stories at the heart of the conversation. From joining the Upside Down social media challenge to sharing your story, there are lots of ways to get involved. Visit the [World Cancer Day website](#) for resources and ideas to take part.

Global Hepatitis Summit

18 – 21 March

The 19th Global Hepatitis Summit (GHS 2025) will be held in Los Angeles, USA and spotlight the latest developments in viral hepatitis research across basic and translational, clinical, and public health. As a milestone year for assessing progress towards WHO’s 2030 elimination goals, GHS 2025 will review achievements while charting the path ahead. Renowned speakers will share insights into research and patient care, alongside workshops for health practitioners and those working in the liver and hepatitis space. For more information on attending GHS 2025, visit [their website](#).

World Tuberculous (TB) Day

24 March 2025

World TB Day raises awareness about the far-reaching impacts of tuberculosis and calls for global action to end the epidemic. Highlighting the impacts of co-infection with viral hepatitis is important as people living with TB have a high prevalence of hepatitis B and C and co-infection can mean poorer treatment outcomes. Visit the [WHO website](#) closer to the date for resources and information on how to get involved.

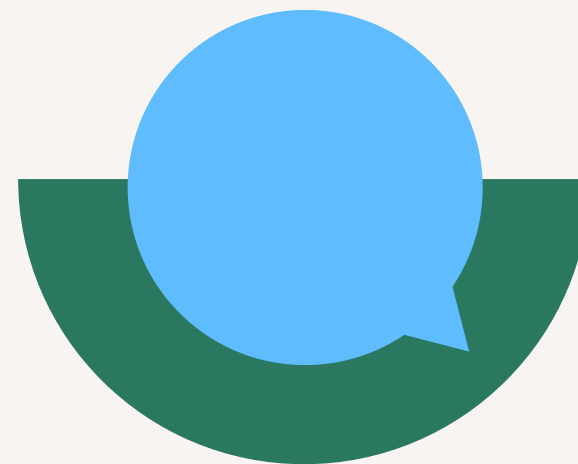
APASL

30 March, Beijing

Under the theme “Multidisciplinary Collaboration For Elimination & Cure”, the 34th Annual Meeting of APASL will take place in Beijing, China. The five-day programme covers topics from basic research and clinical management to drug discovery and surgical procedures. Sessions include interprofessional forums to enhance communication across disciplines, joint symposium to foster international collaboration, and abstract presentations for researchers to showcase their findings. Beyond academic exchange, there is also a cultural social event. Visit the [APASL website](#) for more information.



HEP HEADLINES



World Hepatitis Summit 2024 report and session recordings now available

Hosted from 9 – 11 April in Lisbon, Portugal, the World Hepatitis Summit (WHS) 2024 brought together almost 700 delegates from 95 countries. Under the theme of “Integrate, accelerate, and eliminate”, WHS was an opportunity to raise our collective voices and call for a scale up of hepatitis responses. Relive the event and enhance your learnings with the summit report and session recordings available on the [WHS website](https://www.worldhepatitissummit.org) now.

Sign up for news about WHS 2026, taking place in Bangkok Thailand, at worldhepatitissummit.org

Dee Lee elected WHA President-elect



Dee Lee, Director of Inno Asia since 2023 and former Director of Inno Community Development Organisation (2007-2022), has been selected as WHA President-Elect. A WHA WPRO Regional Board Member (2015-2019, 2024), he also serves on international coalitions for hepatitis elimination. Starting his tenure in January 2025, Dee will work closely with current President Rachel Halford to ensure a smooth transition, and bolster WHA's position on the global stage.

Read the [full announcement here](#).



SAAFARA step up PMTCT efforts in Senegal

SAAFARA Hépatites Sénégal are ramping up efforts to prevent mother to child transmission in Senegal. On 15 October, the organisation launched their Preventing Future Infections project with a launch event in the Guédiawaye Wakhinane Health District and broadcast live on Facebook. Over 150 people took part including the Ministry of Health, religious and customary leaders, mayors, and members of the local community. Additionally, SAAFARA held a two-day training session for healthcare workers to strengthen their knowledge of hepatitis B and preventing mother-to-child transmission.



New WHA regional board members announced

Following elections held from 25 November to 8 December, WHA voting members have selected three new regional board members.

Antonio Oñate, Founder of Fundación Hepatos Aión, A.C. in Mexico joins as PAHO Regional Board Member. Reazul Islam from the National Liver Foundation of Bangladesh resumes his role as SEARO Regional Board Member. Thomas Tu, Deputy Chair and Secretary, Hepatitis B Voices Australia takes on the role as WPRO Regional Board Member.

Read the full announcement [here](#).

EVENT REPORTS

Beating hepatitis and liver cancer together

WORLD CANCER CONGRESS

Geneva, Switzerland, 17 – 19 September

What was discussed?

The World Cancer Congress brings together global health stakeholders to strengthen the action and impact of the cancer community. This year WHA co-organised a digital session with the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and the Hepatitis B Foundation to shed light on the critical connection between liver cancer and viral hepatitis. Discussions emphasised the importance of collaboration between the cancer and hepatitis communities to implement cost-effective, high-impact approaches. Implementing such approaches will reduce the burden of viral hepatitis and by consequence, reduce liver cancer illness and death. WHA presented the results from our global survey on awareness of the link between liver cancer and hepatitis. WHA also engaged delegates with a stand in the Global Village that focused on the need for integration.

What were the key take-aways?

1. Liver cancer is the third most common cause of cancer deaths worldwide, but increased joint advocacy is needed to elevate it as a priority within health policies.
2. It is critical to integrate cancer, hepatitis and other health services to make health systems stronger, more efficient and effective.
3. Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience should inform and shape cancer policies. Strong multi-stakeholder partnerships which include people with lived experience are key to address global cancer challenges.



EUROPEAN CANCER SUMMIT 2024

Brussels, Belgium, 20 – 21 November

What was discussed?

The European Cancer Summit aims to unite the cancer community to accelerate efforts against cancer. WHA spoke during the session 'Going Global: Eliminating HPV and Hep B in Europe and beyond', highlighting the role of hepatitis testing in preventing liver cancer. WHA advocated for enabling civil society to provide community-based testing for hepatitis alongside healthcare workers to expand testing access. The session emphasised the need for all stakeholders to work together to prevent cancers caused by viral hepatitis and HPV.

What were the key take-aways?

1. Europe's Beating Cancer Plan has elevated cancer as a priority within the EU, but more initiatives are needed for prevention, early detection, and screening of cancer.
2. European cancer and health policy may change under the new EU Health Commissioner.
3. The viral hepatitis and HPV communities should work more closely together to raise awareness of vaccine-preventable cancers.



World Hepatitis Testing Week

This November, WHA launched an all-new testing drive to combat the global rise of hepatitis. From 18 to 24 November 2024, individuals, organisations, and partners around the world celebrated the first World Hepatitis Testing Week, raising awareness online and in their communities.

More than 300 million people are living with hepatitis worldwide. Only very few know they have it and most won't find out until it's too late. Getting tested for hepatitis could save your life.

World Hepatitis Testing Week events

NOhep medical visionaries at AASLD

To kick off World Hepatitis Testing Week, the NOhep Medical Visionaries came together at The Liver Meeting in San Diego on Saturday 16 November to discuss different strategies for scaling up access to hepatitis testing. The forum brought medical professionals and advocates from across the globe together to share different examples of best practice and what followed was a wide-ranging discussion which covered:

- The importance of supportive laws and policies to promote testing, such as universal testing laws in primary care
- How to use point-of-care testing, self-testing, mail order dried blood spot testing and potential for new diagnostics (if we advocate now) which will continue to make testing more accessible to more people
- The power of peers in improving access to testing
- Designing testing services to meet people where they are with health care professionals and advocates sharing the testing they have delivered in mosques, pharmacies, harm reduction clinics and many more – we need to think creatively

- Integration with other health areas, such as testing in mental health care settings - you can learn more about what the NOhep Medical Visionaries are doing to increase access to hepatitis testing and treatment in mental health care settings on page 20.

The forum highlighted that when it comes to testing there is no one size fits all and we all have a role to play in scaling up services which are more accessible to those that need them.





Webinar

To begin World Hepatitis Testing Week, the World Hepatitis Alliance and the World Health Organization co-chaired a webinar on 18 November to discuss the importance of expanding access to testing for hepatitis if we are to achieve the 2030 hepatitis elimination goals. Co-chaired by our Past President, Danjuma Adda, and Diana Faini, Technical Officer, Strategic Information Analysis and Use, World Health Organization, the webinar explored different strategies for scaling up testing with a multi-stakeholder panel. Speakers included:

- **Sahar Bajis**, World Health Organization
- **Lucy Matumbu**, TB HIV CARE, South Africa
- **Capucine Penicaud**, Eureka
- **Humberto Silva**, Brazil Rotary
- **Dr Huma Qureshi**, Consultant Gastroenterologist, Pakistan

Watch the webinar recording [here](#).

To amplify the message of the first-ever World Hepatitis Testing Week, WHA developed a range of multi-channel campaign materials, such as social media graphics, posters, films, gifs, zoom backgrounds and other assets in different languages highlighting the urgent need for testing. There were also options for advocates to customise their assets to include their photos, logos, and messaging.

Watch the campaign videos [here](#).

Health influencers, including individuals with lived experiences, also played a pivotal role in the campaign. They actively promoted campaign resources and encouraged their networks to prioritise hepatitis testing.

WHA members and stakeholders embraced creative ways to promote the message, from media engagements, to rallies, workshops, and offering testing services in their communities.



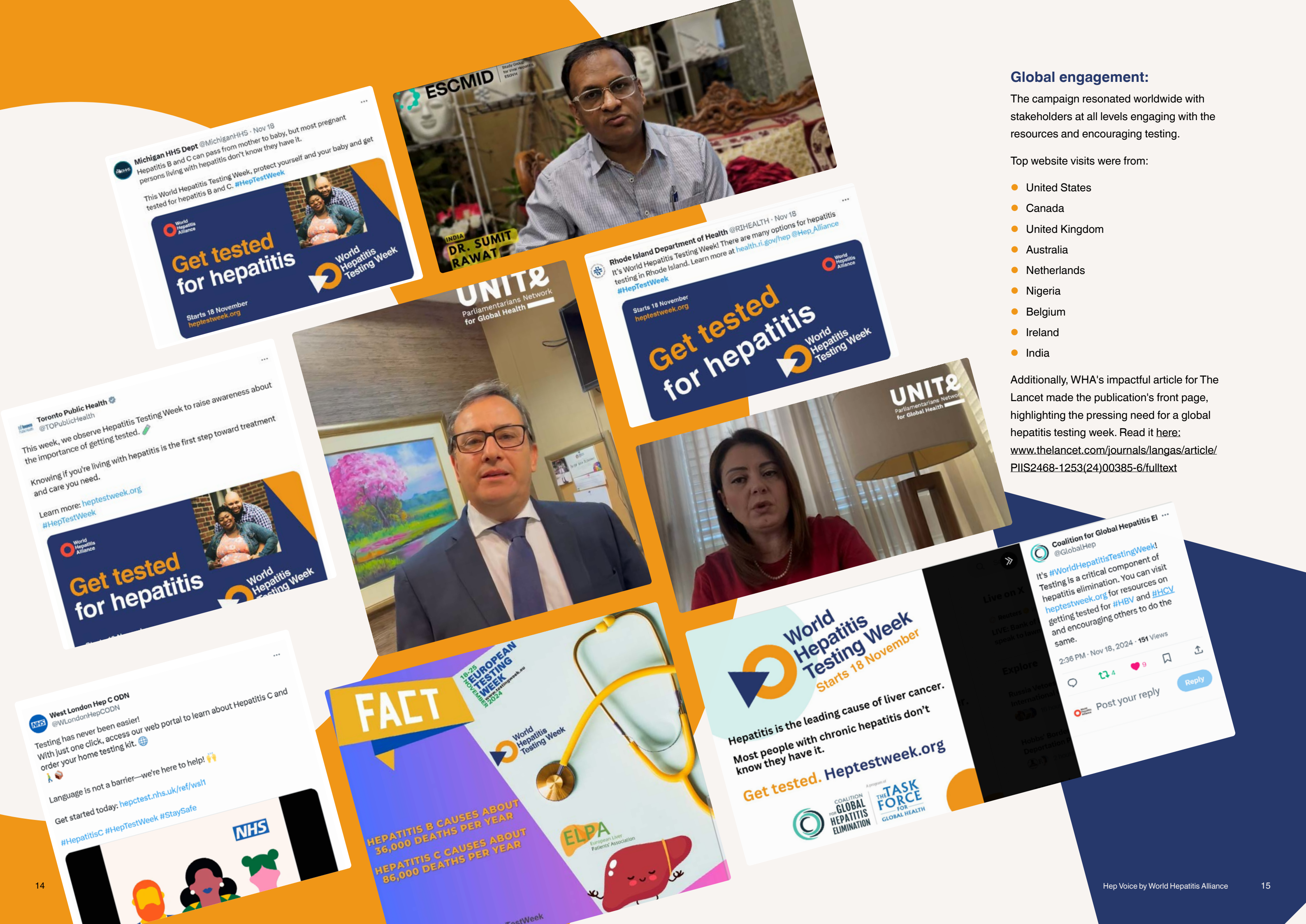
Global engagement:

The campaign resonated worldwide with stakeholders at all levels engaging with the resources and encouraging testing.

Top website visits were from:

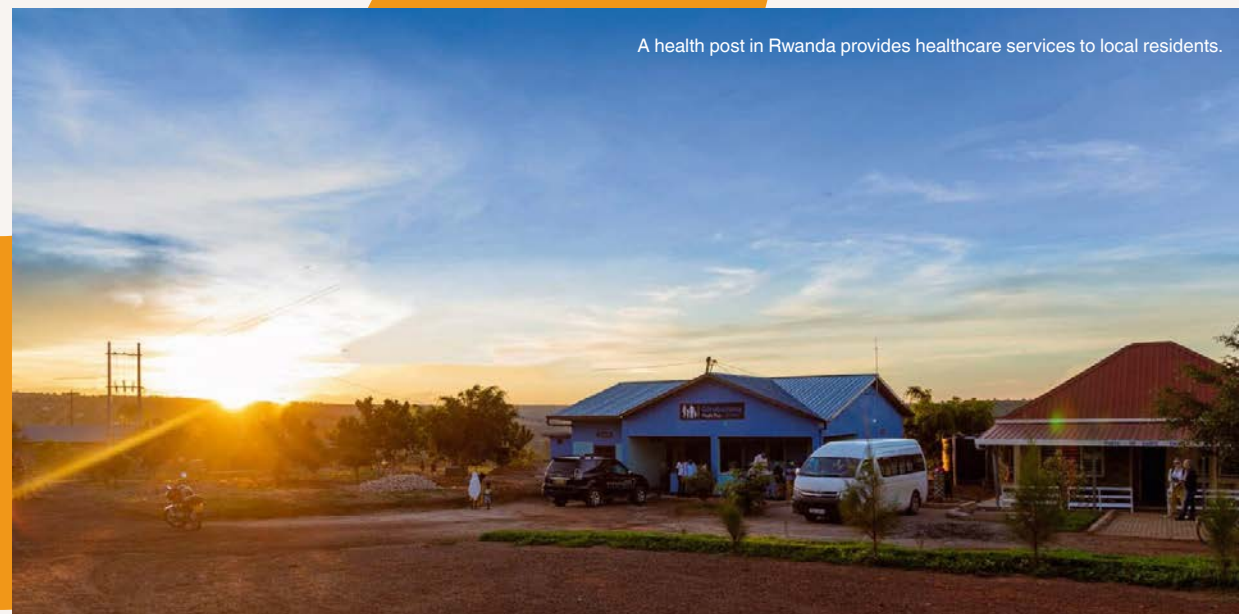
- United States
- Canada
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- Netherlands
- Nigeria
- Belgium
- Ireland
- India

Additionally, WHA's impactful article for The Lancet made the publication's front page, highlighting the pressing need for a global hepatitis testing week. Read it [here](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253(24)00385-6/fulltext): [www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253\(24\)00385-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langas/article/PIIS2468-1253(24)00385-6/fulltext)



Thank you

to our supporters of the first World Hepatitis Testing Week!



A health post in Rwanda provides healthcare services to local residents.

Together, towards hepatitis elimination

Despite advancement in vaccination and treatment, the fight against hepatitis is far from over with millions remaining undiagnosed and multiple lives lost every minute.

As a leader in point-of-care diagnostics, at Abbott, we are driven by our mission to expand access to high-quality hepatitis testing for everyone, including Determine™ HBsAg 2, the world's most sensitive rapid diagnostic test for detection of hepatitis B.

We remain committed to the elimination of viral hepatitis as a global health threat by 2030, which is demonstrated through our comprehensive, affordable, scalable, and accessible testing solutions setting a new standard of care in hepatitis point-of-care testing.

Our partnerships with governments, implementers, advocates, and civil society organizations such as the World Hepatitis Alliance underscore our commitment to amplify disease

awareness, build capacity, and expand access to life-saving testing solutions.

By advancing case finding, early diagnosis, and linkage to treatment, we are reinforcing the momentum toward hepatitis elimination, preventing mother to child transmission of hepatitis B, and creating a path to hepatitis-free generations around the world.

Together with our partners, we can transform this shared vision into a hepatitis-free future fostering healthier communities and leaving a lasting impact for generations to come.

Damian Halloran

Vice President, Infectious Disease,
Rapid Diagnostics, Abbott



abbvie

Abbvie

Steadfast in our commitment and support for HCV elimination by 2030.

At AbbVie, we're supporting people with HCV by identifying and successfully linking them to appropriate care – one at a time.

We are passionate and committed to finding and treating populations considered among the “missing millions” to achieve the WHO's target of HCV elimination by 2030.



Cepheid

At Cepheid, we're proud to support the World Hepatitis Alliance Testing Week raising awareness about the critical importance of hepatitis testing. Working with healthcare professionals worldwide we are dedicated to expanding access to PCR testing for viral hepatitis as well as TB, HIV, STIs and respiratory infections at the point of need, delivering same-day results you can trust, transforming the diagnostic pathway, and enhancing patient outcomes.

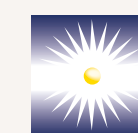
Globally, about 87% of people living with hepatitis B and 64% of those with hepatitis C are unaware of their status. This emphasizes the urgent need for testing and awareness.

We kicked off the first WHA testing week, during AASLD 2024, featuring inspiring panellists who highlighted how using innovative point-of-care HCV RNA testing can transform hepatitis elimination programs. Watch the highlights from our [LinkedIn Live event](#) and join us in this critical fight against hepatitis!



Roche

At Roche, patient-centricity is paramount, driving our commitment to continually enhance our trusted infectious disease diagnostics portfolio. Recognizing that investing in diagnostic solutions entails long-term partnerships, we offer integrated solutions tailored to various throughputs and disease areas. These solutions are designed to address the evolving needs of countries striving to eliminate viral hepatitis. Our team of Roche experts stands ready to support your laboratory and ultimately, country or region in achieving your objectives in testing and disease elimination.



OraSure Technologies, Inc.





Community Impact Programme

Empowering the next generation of hepatitis advocates:

The CIP Accelerator Programme

The Community Impact Programme (CIP) Accelerator Programme equips hepatitis advocates with the skills and confidence to drive change.

Combining online workshops with an in-person training, the programme covers key areas including advocacy strategy development, stakeholder engagement, storytelling, and resource mobilisation. Participants gain a deeper understanding of viral hepatitis prevention, testing, and treatment, as well as knowledge on how to engage in the wider health agenda. They leave the programme with comprehensive advocacy plans, tools to influence decision-makers and the skills to secure funding at city, state, and national levels.

Launched in April 2024, the second cohort concluded in December 2024. Hosted by a dedicated course trainer, participants took part in five online workshops from September to December 2024 and attended a face-to-face session at the

Conference on Liver Disease in Africa (COLDA) in Cairo, Egypt from 19 - 21 September (pictured). Attending COLDA offered participants a unique opportunity to connect with peers and learn from one another.

The in-person training at COLDA proved especially impactful, with many participants attending an international conference for the first time. Dr Adil Qureishi, Coordinator for Community Investment Health Projects at United Way Mumbai reflected, "Meeting advocates from diverse backgrounds at COLDA was inspiring. It broadened my understanding of global efforts to combat hepatitis and reinforced the importance of collaboration. These interactions emphasised shared challenges and innovative solutions, which motivates me to apply best practices in my local context."

For Lucy Matumbu, an advocate for people who use drugs (PWUDs) in rural South Africa, COLDA was a pivotal moment. "Meeting other advocates and participating in COLDA was a transformative experience that has significantly influenced my work. Sharing experiences, challenges and successes helped build a sense of community and solidarity. COLDA rekindled my passion for advocacy."

Participants are already seeing tangible results from the programme. Lucy used her learnings to draft a successful funding programme for a community project. "I wrote the proposal using

everything I learned at the CIP programme and within three weeks, I got donations for needle and syringe packages, 50 dignity packs, and refreshments for our December event. I managed to get seedlings for land that was donated to one of our organisations in Mpumalanga, which we will use to help empower our peers through job creation and skill development. All this has been possible because of lessons I learned from CIP".

The CIP Accelerator Programme has proven an invaluable resource for advocates working to eliminate viral hepatitis. Participants praise its comprehensive approach, which covers a range of topics while fostering collaboration among people from diverse backgrounds and sectors. Lucy concluded, "This opportunity is treasured, and I take it as an achievement for myself and my community of PWUDs."

Encouraged by this success, WHA aims to expand the Accelerator programme, offering more advocates the knowledge, tools, and confidence to secure funding and drive change in their communities.

Feeling inspired? Separate from the guided Accelerator programme, we offer a range of free e-learning modules for you to complete at your own pace. Sign up for CIP at worldhepatitisalliance.org/community-impact-programme

The overlooked link between hepatitis and mental health: NOhep Medical Visionaries Forum at INHSU 2024

People living with severe mental health conditions are more likely to have hepatitis B and C, yet this link is often overlooked in service provision. To address this gap, we've begun focusing on viral hepatitis and mental health, advocating for a more holistic approach to service provision.

On 10 October 2024 – World Mental Health Day – we brought together leading healthcare professionals and advocates at INSHU for a forum on hepatitis and mental health. Discussions centred on designing and delivering integrated services that address both physical and mental health needs. Screening in mental health care settings - both inpatient and community care - was identified as essential to a comprehensive hepatitis elimination strategy, given the heightened prevalence of hepatitis B and C among people with severe mental health conditions.

Speakers Dr Jordan Feld, Professor of Medicine, Director, Toronto Centre for Liver Disease, Rachel Halford, President, World Hepatitis Alliance, and Ashley Brown, Consultant Hepatologist & Professor of Practice, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust shared insights from their work on testing and treatment in mental health care settings. They emphasised the importance of collaboration across disciplines, especially in hospital mental health units, and reflected on their work in local settings to test and treat people accessing mental health care for hepatitis.

The discussions highlighted the importance of buy-in from healthcare professionals across disciplines, especially in hospital mental health units. Consent for patients in secure mental health units was raised as a key barrier, with multidisciplinary teams playing a vital role in building trust and increasing patient knowledge.

Peer-led models, already proven effective in hepatitis C treatment, were highlighted as a potential solution in mental health services. People with lived experience are uniquely positioned to support others through diagnosis and care. Expanding peer involvement in secure units and community settings could significantly enhance testing and treatment, driving progress toward truly integrated care.



WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS TO WHA

Our members are at the heart of what we do. They form an international network of organisations, working to support people living with viral hepatitis and are the reason we are able to speak as the global voice of the millions of people affected by viral hepatitis worldwide.

This quarter, we have welcomed 16 new members – 10 voting organisations, 6 non-voting members – bringing our total to 366.

Our latest members are:

ONG AISD (Benin):

Focuses on hepatitis B and C awareness, screening, vaccination, and patient advocacy

Somali Hepatitis Trust (Somalia):

Dedicated to prevention, control, and treatment of hepatitis in vulnerable communities.

ENDA Tiers Monde / ENDA Santé Guiné-Bissau (Guinea Bissau):

Provides hepatitis screening and supports national health strategies.

Občianske združenie Prima (Slovakia):

Take a harm reduction approach with a multidisciplinary team.

Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo Guiné-Bissau (ADPP-GB) (Guinea Bissau):

Promotes programmes targeting HIV, TB, and viral hepatitis.

Afya Harmony Foundation (Tanzania):

Carries out prevention, awareness and support initiatives.

Knut Obere Foundation (Nigeria):

Runs awareness campaigns, conducts hepatitis B testing, awareness campaigns, and provides antiviral access.

Mandara Community Welfare Initiative (Nigeria):

Strives to reduce mother-to-child hepatitis transmission and catalyses community-led change.

Universal Humanitarian Healthcare - UHHC (Kenya):

Believe in uplifting livelihoods by strengthening access to quality healthcare and work with a range of stakeholders to address the hepatitis burden.

Youth Health Action Network (Nigeria):

Engages young people in hepatitis B, C, and HIV advocacy and prevention.

End Hep C SF (USA):

A collaborative initiative focused on eliminating hepatitis C in San Francisco.

Association for Social Development (Pakistan):

Delivers Hep C “test-treat-prevent” care across Punjab.

Associação Existências (Portugal):

Provides STI and hepatitis screening and counselling for vulnerable populations.

ARAS - Romanian Association Against AIDS (Romania):

Provides testing, testing, counselling and referrals for at-risk groups.

Adonai Health and Development Foundation (AHADEF) (Nigeria):

Works to reduce the spread of diseases among underserved communities with various health projects.

Patients with Hepatitis (Albania):

Advocates for better screening, treatment access, and patient education.

Master the art of writing a winning proposal!

Do you want to secure funding to amplify your advocacy efforts? The new module on WHA's CIP e-Learning Course can help you develop the essential skills for planning, writing, and managing successful funding proposals.

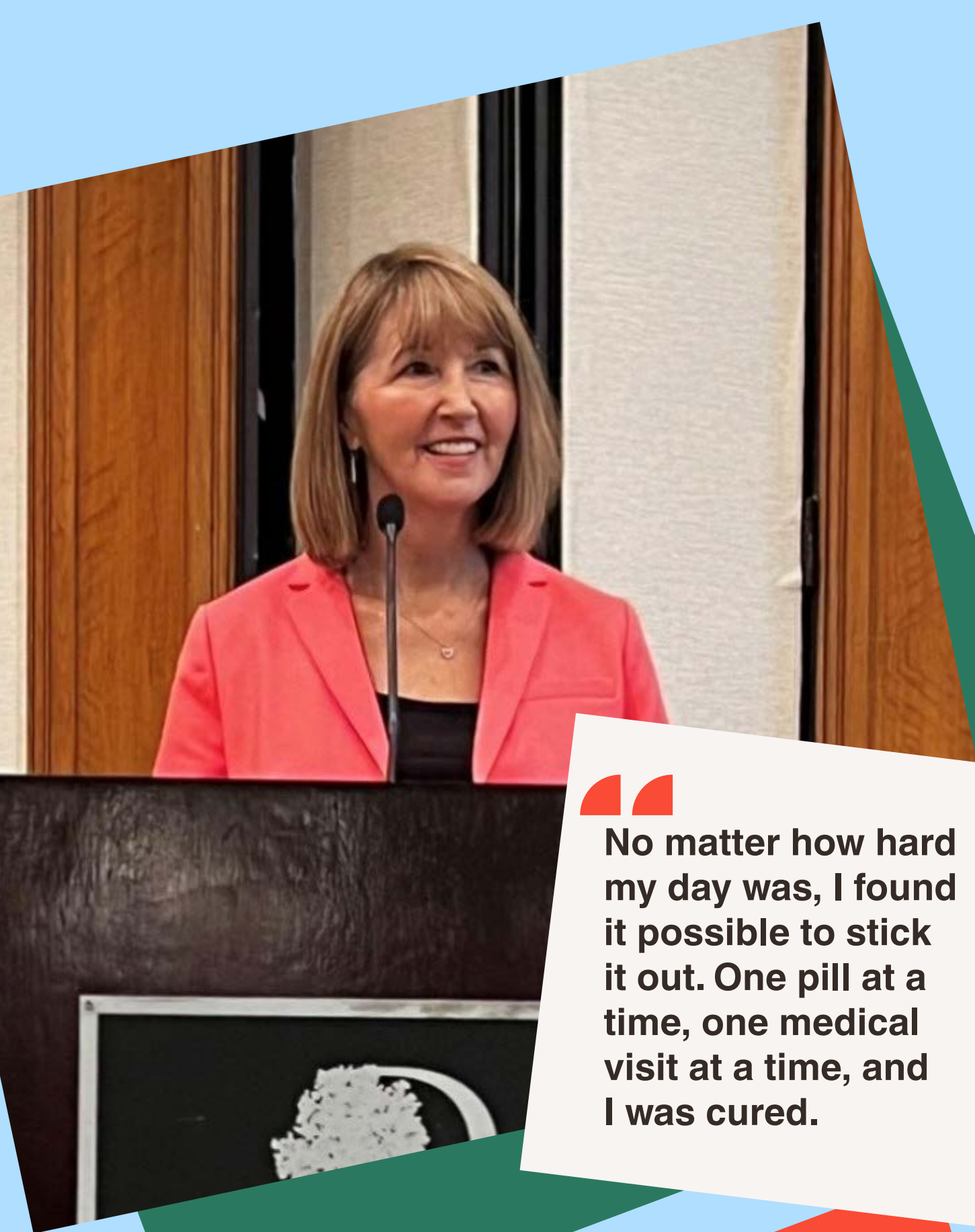
What you'll learn:

- ▶ How to make your proposals stand out
- ▶ How to strategically plan and budget projects
- ▶ How to respond to an unsuccessful proposal
- ▶ Understanding different types of funders and choosing the right one

The Modules are available in French and Spanish.

[SIGN UP HERE](#)

Community Impact Programme



No matter how hard my day was, I found it possible to stick it out. One pill at a time, one medical visit at a time, and I was cured.

Hep-voices

KAREN'S STORY

Karen Hoyt is a resilient hepatitis C survivor who has transformed her treatment journey into a mission to help others. She refers to her community as her “best friends” and uses her blog, [iHelp C](#), to share a liver-loving diet, raise awareness, offer practical advice, and advocate for improved care and support for people with hepatitis C or cirrhosis.

We speak to Karen who shares her experiences with hepatitis C, her treatment journey, and how she continues to navigate life post-diagnosis.

Can you please share your personal journey of living with hepatitis, including when you were diagnosed with the virus and your initial reactions?

I had never lived in anyone else's body, so my health seemed normal to me. How could I have known that most people don't feel tired and achy all the time? Hepatitis C was a stealth killer lurking in my bloodstream and breeding in my liver. Through my adulthood, it was silently destroying me. Then it finally threw a death blow. Overnight I turned yellow and my whole body swelled up. In the emergency room, the doctor's pronounced that I had end stage cirrhosis. By then, my brain was so foggy that I accused them of mixing up my records and literally ran out of the hospital. My family brought me back, and the denial had to come off. I was dying because of hepatitis C.

Did you tell your family about your diagnosis, and how did they feel?

My family and friends were shocked and immediately got tested. Thankfully no one else had it, but it dealt a harsh blow. I was a pale, faded version of my former self. Anemic from varices bleeding, yellow with jaundice, and wild thinking from hepatic encephalopathy turned this school teacher into a zoned-out cry baby. It seemed a cruel way to live – or die.

What challenges did you face during the period when you were living with hepatitis, both physically and emotionally?

The first year was a jumble of testing and procedures to get my body regulated. I was on high doses of diuretics, beta blockers, and restricted sodium and liquids. There was no cure at the time, but new drugs were set to be released soon.

How do you manage your hepatitis, and what kind of treatment options were available to you?

I finally started on a 52-week regimen of (interferon) injections given at home, daily Ribavirin, and protease inhibitors. I had regular



Another person could set a reminder and be sure that I took my medications on time. My medical provider contacted coupons for some prescriptions that were too expensive. At my weakest, friends and neighbours even offered to shop for me or drive me to the doctor.

Could you share any strategies or activities that helped you cope with the emotional challenges of living with hepatitis?

In the darkest hours, I found support in online websites and groups, reading other's posts about how they managed to survive. These people became lifelong friends and supported me while starting my website www.ihelpc.com. My clinic was always a phone call

away and hearing a knowledgeable voice was always reassuring.

Have you encountered any stigma or discrimination living with hepatitis, and how did you handle it?

It was beyond comprehension that someone might judge me because of hepatitis C. It was a virus that was living in my bloodstream. I never got into conversations about how I got it. Those people who care about me only wanted me to get cured. Those who were not in my inner circle didn't matter.

Is there a message you would like to share with others living with viral hepatitis?

I wish that I had known how much inner strength I had. No matter how hard my day was, I found it possible to stick it out. One pill at a time, one medical visit at a time, and I was cured. Most of us have the will to survive even the hardest trials. We even gain strength from what we survive. After becoming hepatitis C free, it feels like nothing is impossible to me.

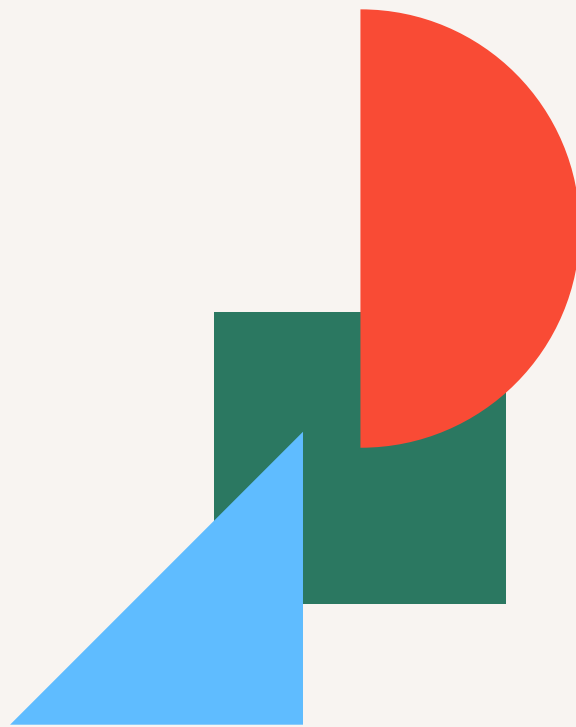
blood transfusions to keep me going until I was cured. Even after getting rid of HCV, I still had advanced liver cirrhosis. Every six months, I went for blood labs and an ultrasound to watch for liver cancer. Eating healthy protein and low sodium helped me stabilise and I was able to live a fairly active lifestyle. I was eventually diagnosed with HCC liver cancer and after a year of chemotherapy, I received a liver transplant.

What challenges did you encounter during your treatment journey and how did you manage them?

Looking back, when I was first diagnosed, it seemed like my life was over. I lost hope and grew angry about what hepatitis C had stolen from me. I was forced to rely on others. My whole body including my kidneys and heart were threatened. The joint pain made me feel old and broken down.

I needed help. Instead of just having one family member be a caregiver, I learned that one relative might offer help with meals during my treatment.





The Magazine

