



Date

Location

**Hepatitis impact in Asia Pacific to rise if not tackled
on multiple levels: according to experts**

WHO's World Hepatitis Day highlights viral hepatitis as a global health problem

Combined, hepatitis B and C affects one in 12 people worldwide, claiming the lives of approximately one million people every year¹. In India at least 25 million people are estimated to be infected with hepatitis B and C virus.

Asia Pacific carries the highest burden of viral hepatitis, with India and China together having an estimated 123 million people chronically infected with hepatitis B and 59 million people chronically infected with hepatitis C, accounting for almost 50 percent of all infections worldwide.^{2,3}

This year a group of leading experts in viral hepatitis is urging governments and the public across Asia Pacific to become more aware of the devastating effects of hepatitis on individuals, their families and the community at large. The group, known as CEVHAP (Coalition to Eradicate Viral Hepatitis in Asia Pacific) was recently formed to address the lack of awareness and political will to tackle issues associated with viral hepatitis.

July 28 also marks Professor Baruch Blumberg's birthday, winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize for his discovery of the virus that causes hepatitis B.

This is the first year that 28 July will be recognized as World Hepatitis Day globally, as a result of World Health Assembly's Resolution on Viral Hepatitis (WHA63.R18) of 21 May 2010. The Resolution also expresses concern about the lack of progress in the prevention, control and treatment of viral hepatitis around the

world.

In India, CEVHAP is represented by a group of liver specialists from across the nation.

“World Hepatitis Day aims to raise awareness of viral hepatitis, as well as garner support for and create awareness of the disease. The long term objective of CEVHAP's World Hepatitis Day Campaign is to deliver improvements in health outcomes for people living with viral hepatitis, particularly hepatitis B and C, said Dr Samir Shah, founding member and Executive Committee member of CEVHAP.

“There is a growing need for the Government of India to focus on this issue and one step in the right direction is the recent introduction of universal HBV vaccination which is a breakthrough for viral hepatitis in India. The general public also needs to be made aware of the gravity of viral hepatitis in India and the importance of timely vaccinations against hepatitis B,” added Dr. Shah.

The number of people chronically infected with and annually dying as a result of viral hepatitis is on the same scale as HIV/AIDS. Despite a larger disease burden hepatitis lacks the same level of awareness and political momentum.

CEVHAP's goal is to act as a bridge between the new WHO Resolution and the Asia Pacific region. Its early focus is on hepatitis B and C, the two types of hepatitis with the greatest impact in the region.

“While chronic hepatitis is a silent disease with little or no symptoms for many years, it is also a silent disease when it comes to public awareness and government attention. This has led to the situation we find ourselves in today, where a large population with viral hepatitis does not seek medical attention or receive treatment - and this is also true for countries where the treatment is reimbursed by the government,” said Professor D S Chen, Distinguished Chair Professor of the



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College of Medicine at National Taiwan University and co-founder of CEVHAP.

There is urgency within Asia Pacific to implement policies that provide patients access to screening and treatment. Currently, more than half of chronic hepatitis patients live in countries with no provision for free testing and 41 percent of patients live in countries where no government funding exists for treatment of hepatitis B or C.⁴

About CEVHAP

The Coalition to Eradicate Viral Hepatitis in Asia Pacific (CEVHAP) is the first organization of its kind in the Region, established as an independent, multidisciplinary body to advocate for public policy reforms that reduce the burden of viral hepatitis in Asia Pacific.

Incorporated in October 2010, CEVHAP membership is comprised of many world-renowned hepatitis and virology experts, utilising the collective expertise of its members to assist the region through partnership with a broad range of stakeholders, including government bodies in public policy formulation and health education.

CEVHAP founder members in India are Dr Samir Shah (**Mumbai**), Shiv Sarin (**New Delhi**), Dr Abhijit Chowdhury(**Kolkata**), Prof Gourdas Choudhuri (**Lucknow**), Prof Ajit Sood(**Ludhiana**) and Dr PN Rao (**Hyderabad**)

World Hepatitis Day 2011 in Asia Pacific

World Hepatitis Day across the world will be recognised by thousands of individuals, patient groups, non-governmental organisations and associations, healthcare professionals, governments, and companies. In Asia Pacific, there will be World Hepatitis Day activities in the following countries and regions: Australia, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

¹ World Health Organization. Viral hepatitis: Report by the Secretariat.

http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB126/B126_15-en.pdf (accessed 30 March, 2010)

² World Health Organization. Available at: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/hepatitis/en/>



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³ Ferlay et al. Globocan 2002, Cancer incidence, mortality and prevalence worldwide, IARC Press, Lyon 2004

⁴ World Hepatitis Alliance, Viral Hepatitis: Global Policy

http://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/Libraries/Campaign_Materials/Viral_Hepatitis_Global_Policy.sflb.ashx



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