

Brazil sets out path to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030

Having fewer cases than initially thought, elimination in Brazil is sustainable and financially possible, by providing treatment for all

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New data released at this week's World Hepatitis Summit in Sao Paulo, Brazil (1-3 November) shows that host nation Brazil is now well-placed to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030.

The data, released by Brazil's Ministry of Health with support from the Polaris Observatory, Center for Disease Analysis Foundation (CDAF), Lafayette, CO, USA – and in partnership with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) – reveals that there are 657,000 people in Brazil with hepatitis C infection requiring treatment. While this is a substantial number, it is far fewer than the previous estimate of 1.6 million cases.

“As we now believe there are less than half of the cases we originally thought, this obviously makes our elimination project more feasible,” says Brazil's Minister of Health, Ricardo Barros. “Both in terms of the cost of treatment and the practicalities of getting people into care and treatment, we have a better chance of success.”

In addition to this, the Brazilian Ministry of Health has also decided to lift treatment restrictions for hepatitis C. Previously, only the patients with the most advanced liver damage (fibrosis/cirrhosis) were eligible for treatment. However, now the government has decided that patients at any stage of liver damage can come forward for treatment. This will help in both the elimination effort and prevent onward transmission and mortality.

Risk factors for hepatitis C infection include injection drug use past or present, including steroids, unsafe medical or dental procedures in Brazil or abroad, unsterile tattoos and piercings, and blood transfusions for any reason before 1993, when Brazil began screening all donated blood for hepatitis C.

Since 2015, the Brazilian Ministry of Health has made available directly acting antiviral (DAA) drugs, which cure most cases of hepatitis C in 12 weeks or less with few or no side effects. The Brazilian Government was able to negotiate a huge price reduction in order to be able to offer the treatment to as many infected people as possible.

The Ministry of Health is now aiming to treat 50,000 patients per year – for the first years and decreasing by 2030 –, as well as introducing new initiatives to screen as many people as possible. This initiative to tackle hepatitis C follows on from the Ministry's work on hepatitis B, opening up free vaccination to the entire population of Brazil, whatever their age.

“Just as with the HIV epidemic, Brazil is determined that we should be a world leader in battling hepatitis C,” says Adele Benzaken, Director of the Brazilian Ministry of Health's Department of Surveillance, Prevention and Control of STIs, HIV/AIDS and Viral Hepatitis. “Our elimination plan announced today should mean that, by 2030, hepatitis C will no longer be a threat to public health in Brazil.”

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For country level data from Polaris, see:

<http://tonykirby.com/hepatitis/PolarisGlobalprevalencefinal.xlsm>

<http://tonykirby.com/hepatitis/PolarisdataGlobalprofilefinal.xlsx>

About Viral Hepatitis

Viral hepatitis is inflammation of the liver caused by a virus. The Global Burden of Data findings illustrate that the total deaths cause by viral hepatitis, including acute cases, cirrhosis and liver cancer account for 1.34 million deaths globally. There are five different hepatitis viruses - hepatitis A, B, C, D and E. Hepatitis A is spread mainly through ingestion of contaminated food and water and the disease is often endemic in countries with a lack of safe water and poor sanitation. Hepatitis B is transmitted through contact with the blood or other bodily fluids of an infected person and approximately 257 million people are living with chronic infections. Hepatitis C is mainly spread through blood-to-blood contact such as unsafe injection practices and inadequate sterilisation of medical equipment. Today, 69 million people are living with the disease. Hepatitis D is passed on through contact with infected blood and only occurs in people who are already infected with hepatitis B. Hepatitis E, like hepatitis A, is transmitted through ingesting contaminated food or water.

The World Hepatitis Summit 2017

Between 1 – 3 November 2017 a global audience of civil society groups, World Health Organization and its Member States, patient organisations form the World Hepatitis Alliance's 249 organisational members, policy-makers, public health scientists and funders will come together in Brazil, at the World Hepatitis Summit, to galvanise the global response to viral hepatitis. The World Hepatitis Summit is a joint initiative between World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Hepatitis Alliance - in collaboration with a different host country for each Summit. Its mission is to support countries in meeting the targets needed to eliminate viral hepatitis.

<http://www.worldhepatitissummit.org/>

The World Hepatitis Alliance

The World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) is a patient-led and patient driven non-governmental organisation. With 252 member patient groups from 84 countries, WHA works with governments, national members and other key partners to raise awareness of viral hepatitis and influence global change. To achieve a world free from viral hepatitis, WHA provides global leadership in advocacy, awareness-raising and the fight to end its social injustice.

About the Center for Disease Analysis

The CDA is a public health research firm based Lafayette, Colorado, USA, with expertise in epidemiology and disease modelling. One of its main areas of focus is the epidemiology of the hepatitis B, C, and D viruses, which is done through its Polaris Observatory data centre.

http://centerforda.com/about_us.htm

<http://polarisobservatory.org/>

