

THE HEALTH FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

December, 2023



THE
HEALTH
FOUNDATION
for a Hepatitis-Free Pakistan

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The World Hepatitis Alliance in its recent briefing has put the focus on Hepatitis Elimination and Achieving Health for All. Universal health coverage (UHC) is the principle that all individuals should have access to quality essential health services, without experiencing financial hardship. Achieving UHC alongside hepatitis elimination is key as they work together to improve access to health care and strengthen health outcomes. The Health Foundation is an independent social welfare organization committed to social change and striving to bring an improvement in the quality of life of the people through better health. May we prove up to the task.
Insha'Allah.

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JULY 28

WORLD HEPATITIS DAY

WE'RE NOT WAITING
#HepCantWait

EGYPT SLAMS THE BRAKES ON HEPATITIS C, ACHIEVES 'MIRACLE'

Review filed by
Adil Ahmad (Correspondent)



Egypt has treated more than four million people and cut hepatitis C prevalence to just 0.4 percent

Only a few years ago nine million Egyptians, an estimated one in 10, were chronically infected with hepatitis C which constituted the world's highest burden of this debilitating disease. In a public health campaign extraordinary for both its scale and success, Egypt screened its entire population, brokered a deal for hugely discounted drugs and cured almost everyone with the virus.

Health Diplomacy

In a captivating and highly motivating piece in The New York Times International Edition dated December 6, 2023, Stephanie Nolen says that Egypt is on track to be the first country to achieve the World Health Organization goal of eliminating hepatitis C,

and it is following that victory with a campaign of “health diplomacy”, pledging to donate drugs and share expertise with a goal of treating one million African patients in Ghana, Chad and Sudan. These countries are also improving blood safety and injection practices, educating traditional healers, and reducing the rate of new infections by drawing on lessons from Egypt.



“The Egyptian government saw an opportunity to extend its expertise beyond its borders and contribute to global health efforts,” said Khalid Ghaffar, *Egypt’s minister for health and population*.

Source: World Economic Forum (WEF)

“This health diplomacy allows Egypt to leverage its success with hepatitis treatment for the greater benefit of humanity while simultaneously enhancing its standing amongst the global community.” Egypt has treated more than four million people and cut hepatitis C prevalence to just 0.4 percent.

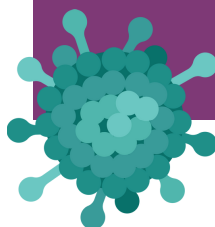
Outstanding success story

“This is one of the greatest accomplishments ever in public health,” said Dr. John W. Ward, the director of the Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination at the Task Force for Global Health. Around the world about 58 million people are chronically infected with hepatitis C according to the World Health Organization, and the vast majority, about 50 million, lives in low and middle income countries. Four in five people don’t know that they have the disease, and about 300,000 die each year of complications, particularly cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Small concern in low income countries

Few countries include the disease in their public health plans, or carry out testing to track the number of people

“The Egyptian government saw an opportunity to extend its expertise beyond its borders and contribute to global health efforts” - Khalid Ghaffar, Egypt’s minister for health and population”



infected, writes Stephanie Nolen. “Hepatitis C has not been the focus of any large international programs, and it has been such a small concern in low income countries that governments rarely even track how many people have it, let alone treat it.

Stats smeared in smog

Pakistan, it appears, is one such low income country where stats on hepatitis C are smeared in smog. However, most, if not all, are agreed that Pakistan now wears Egypt’s dubious former mantle of carrying the world’s highest burden of this debilitating disease. A courtesy call on the Egyptian ambassador may be overdue in this regard.

BROAD VIEW COLUMN

Columns By Saeed Allawala



UHC CREATES NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEPATITIS ELIMINATION

Building on The World Hepatitis Alliance recent briefing mentioned in the THF Chairman's Message, achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030 is one of the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG target 3.8). It is also a key pillar of the World Health Organization's (WHO) strategy, which recommends reorienting health systems towards primary health care to achieve health for all. Many hepatitis-related services are delivered at the primary health care level. Strengthening the role of hepatitis elimination in primary health care improves patient outcomes and increases access to care.

However, achieving hepatitis elimination faces many barriers. There is a lack of funding opportunities and insufficient political will for hepatitis. Low- and middle-income countries often face a heavier burden of hepatitis and don't have the necessary resources to implement hepatitis elimination.

Significant investment is needed in hepatitis prevention, testing and treatment services to achieve hepatitis elimination by 2030. UHC is a path to unlocking domestic funding opportunities to build robust hepatitis services. UHC responses should integrate hepatitis services into immunization, non-communicable disease (NCD), and other health programs to improve patient outcomes and make health systems stronger, more efficient and effective. Civil society is uniquely placed to support their communities and health care systems in hepatitis elimination and UHC responses. By taking a person-centered approach to health care, with civil society playing a central role, governments can ensure that UHC policies respond to communities' needs and that no one is left waiting.

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For more information on hepatitis and UHC visit www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/UHC. For more resources and information on how civil society organizations can get involved with UHC visit www.csemonline.net

THE ACTIVITY ROUND UP



WORLD HEPATITIS DAY

JULY 28, 2023

On the occasion of World Hepatitis Day, The Health Foundation (THF) reaffirms its pledge to continue its efforts of eliminating hepatitis from Pakistan. Hepatitis is a serious health issue confronting our country, with over 19 million people affected and 400,000 new cases each year. Close to 100 people lose their lives daily due to hepatitis related problems.

The session was followed by spot screening for hepatitis C at the premises.

Hepatitis Awareness & Screening program at SIAG

Despite inclement weather and uncertain traffic conditions in Karachi, THF's World Hepatitis Day 2023 activities got off to a start on July 25th, with an awareness session at Sindh Institute of Advanced Endoscopy & Gastroenterology (SIAG).



The awareness session was facilitated by Dr Saad Khalid Niaz who briefed the audience on the hepatitis situation in Pakistan, and the role played by THF in eliminating this disease from the country.

THF NEW CENTER AT SINDH INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED ENDOSCOPY & GASTROENTEROLOGY (SIAG)

THF started screening for hepatitis C at Sindh Institute of Advance Endoscopy & Gastroenterology (SIAG) from July 15, 2023. This has been possible through the facilitation of Dr Saad Khalid Niaz alongwith efforts of THF operations team.



Hepatitis Awareness Walk & Seminar at Murshid Hospital

THF and Murshid General Hospital collaborated for a hepatitis awareness walk on the hospital premises followed by an awareness session for hospital staff. The awareness session was conducted by Dr Huma Qureshi through zoom.



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