

~~END~~HEP2030 The Hepatitis Fund

New funding looks to support catalytic efforts to tackle viral hepatitis globally.

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Geneva Switzerland: The Hepatitis Fund has today (28 July, World Hepatitis Day) announced a series of grants which will accelerate efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis as a global health threat as articulated by the WHO Global Health Sector Strategy.

Viral hepatitis affects over 325 million people worldwide and claims 1.4 million lives every year, despite there being a vaccine and effective treatments for hepatitis B (a disease which affects 257 million people, claiming 884,000 lives every year) and a cure for hepatitis C (a disease which affects 71 million people globally, claiming 400,000 lives every year). In 2016, at the World Health Assembly, all 194 member states of the World Health Organization adopted a resolution committing to the elimination of viral hepatitis by 2030. However, this ambitious but achievable goal has been by and large an unfunded mandate, resulting in very few countries being on track to reach this goal. The Hepatitis Fund aims to accelerate the global efforts by providing catalytic funding.

On announcing the grants Mr. Wangsheng Li, President of The Hepatitis Fund, highlighted:

“Hepatitis is the most neglected infectious diseases relative to its burden globally. The Hepatitis Fund is solely dedicated to supporting viral hepatitis elimination. The grants are intended to have a sustainable impact, improving health systems and saving lives whilst providing evidence of the opportunity and feasibility to accelerate hepatitis elimination. This funding will enhance countries’ efforts to build effective elimination strategies within the framework of Universal Health Coverage.”

The programmes funded through The Hepatitis Fund are innovative projects that are scalable and replicable and will look to tackle a key barrier to hepatitis elimination.

The grants totalling over US\$3 million will:

- Produce data analytics which will be used to inform policy formulation, national planning and implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Develop and roll out an operational guide to assist countries in performing monitoring and evaluation in the WPRO and SEARO regions.
- Expand public engagement in hepatitis B/hepatitis C and crowdsource to spur needed policy changes.

- Demonstrate an integrated viral hepatitis strategy to increase access to diagnostic and treatment services in major urban areas with high prevalence in East Asia.
- Support a regional approach to hepatitis policy change in the Andean region.
- Strengthen capacity for national hepatitis planning across the world.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation logframe for viral hepatitis catalytic funding.
- Demonstrate how to effectively increase hepatitis C screening and treatment by mobilizing rural health centres in high prevalence settings in South Asia.
- Support efforts to maintain the momentum for a global campaign to eliminate viral hepatitis.
- Implement a decentralized and integrated strategy through a national capacity building training programme in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Wangsheng Li continued, “We’re grateful to ZeShan Foundation, our seed funder, for its visionary leadership and its steadfast commitment to our cause since the inception of this project.” The Hepatitis Fund has ambitious plans to step up the funding available to tackle hepatitis globally; and is calling on more institutional donors and like-minded philanthropists to join its campaign to raise US \$ 1 billion to tackle hepatitis in low- and middle-income countries by 2030.

Progress on each grant will be posted regularly on the Fund’s website.

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Editors notes

About The Hepatitis Fund (EndHep2030):

The Hepatitis Fund is a foundation based in Switzerland, which supports the EndHep2030 project launched in 2017 at the World Hepatitis Summit in Brazil. The Fund looks to provide catalytic funding for viral hepatitis programmes to improve the lives of millions of people living with viral hepatitis around the world and to eliminate the disease as a global health threat by 2030. For more information please visit EndHep2030.org.

About viral hepatitis:

Viral hepatitis (Consisting of hepatitis A, B, C, D and E) is a blood-borne infection that attacks the liver. The disease is the leading cause of liver cancer globally. People living with viral hepatitis may experience very few symptoms, meaning that it remains undetected for a long time. 325 million people around the world live with viral hepatitis, 290 million of those people are unaware of their status. Viral hepatitis exerts high mortality and morbidity for the affected populations. If action is not taken urgently, by 2040, viral hepatitis will account for more deaths globally than HIV, TB and malaria combined, as this is already the case in the Asia-Pacific region.”

In 2016, at the World Health Assembly all 194 member states of the World Health Organization adopted resolution WHA69.22 committing to the elimination of viral hepatitis by 2030. However very few countries are on track to reach this goal.

Useful links:

WHO Global Hepatitis Programme:

https://www.who.int/health-topics/hepatitis#tab=tab_1

Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis:

<https://www.who.int/hepatitis/strategy2016-2021/ghss-hep/en/>

World Hepatitis Alliance: <https://www.worldhepatitisalliance.org/>

World Hepatitis Day: <https://www.worldhepatitisday.org/>