

Hepatitis C can be cured

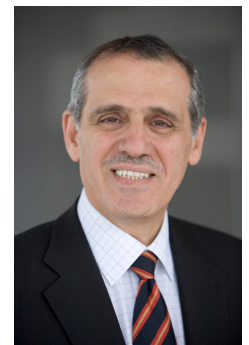
Put hepatitis C medicines within everyone's reach

Message of

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on the occasion of

World Hepatitis Day 2016



On World Hepatitis Day, 28 July 2016, WHO is calling for bringing hepatitis treatment within reach of everyone who is living with chronic hepatitis C. While the availability of a new, safe and effective treatment for viral hepatitis C is cause for rejoicing worldwide, the high price of this treatment is cause for concern.

Every year in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, around 400 000 people are newly infected with hepatitis C virus. Over two thirds of those people will develop chronic hepatitis C, which is one of the main causes of liver cirrhosis and liver cancer. Around 16 million people currently have chronic hepatitis C in our region.

Previously, treatment for hepatitis C infection required injections over long periods, was limited in its effectiveness and caused severe side-effects. Today there are new game-changing medicines at hand that offer the promise of an end to chronic hepatitis C. These medicines, called direct acting antiviral agents, are safer to use, cause fewer side-effects and can cure over 95% of cases with a treatment course of 12–24 weeks. Yet the price of one course of treatment with this new generation of hepatitis medicines can reach many thousands of dollars. This is not affordable for individuals or for governments.

The WHO Constitution asserts that “every individual has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”. The responsibility of ensuring the right to health falls equally on governments and on pharmaceutical companies. Pharmaceutical companies have an obligation to put into place mechanisms for improving access to essential medicines for those who can not afford it, and governments have a responsibility to make essential medicines available in a sustainable manner.

This year's campaign aims at reaching out to everyone with the information that there is now a treatment available that can cure hepatitis C, and that this treatment must be made accessible to everybody in need.

By recognizing the availability and the potential of the new direct acting antivirals for the treatment of hepatitis C infection, people affected by and at risk of hepatitis C can take charge of their health and demand access to treatment as part of their right to health. Here I would like to draw attention to global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, which include “combating viral hepatitis”, and to the commitment made by Member States in May 2016 when they endorsed the global health sector strategy for hepatitis. This strategy sets the goal of eliminating hepatitis C infection as a public health problem by 2030, for which treatment of existing infections is key.

WHO is part of this global commitment and will join hands with people affected by hepatitis C, civil society and governments to ensure that everyone who needs treatment for hepatitis C receives it.



*I want to be cured
Act now!*

