World Health Organization Issues Hepatitis B Guidelines

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued its first hepatitis B virus (HBV) guidelines, which are geared in particular toward simplifying treatment and care for those in limited-resource settings.

“Deciding who needs treatment for hepatitis B depends on a number of factors,” Stefan Wiktor, MD, who leads WHO’s Global Hepatitis Programme, said in a press release. “These new guidelines, which give treatment recommendations that rely on simple, inexpensive tests, will help clinicians make the right decisions.”

The guidelines address:

- The use of simple, non-invasive tests to determine the level of damage done to the liver, including blood tests that measure the ratio of the liver enzyme aspartate aminotransferase (AST) to platelets, as well as a scan-based test, known as transient elastography. These tests can help determine who should be treated.
- Prioritizing treatment for those who have cirrhosis of the liver.
- Treating hep B with Viread (tenofovir) or Baraclude (entecavir), both of which are available in generic form in many countries, costing as little as $5 per month.
- Regularly monitoring people with hep B for signs of liver cancer, as well as to determine if treatment is working and if it can be stopped.
- The particular needs of people coinfected with HIV, as well as the needs of children, adolescents and pregnant women.

To read the press release, click here.

To read the guidelines, click here.

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