England Beats WHO's 2020 Hepatitis C Goals Three Years Early

HCV-related mortality in the country fell by more than 16 percent over the past two years.

April 19, 2019 By Casey Halter

As countries across the globe race to meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) plans to significantly reduce hepatitis C virus (HCV) mortality by 2020, one nation has already beaten the goal: England, which announced this week that it had reached WHO's benchmark nearly three years ahead of schedule, the Pharmaceutical Journal reports.

According to new data published by Public Health England (PHE), hepatitis C–related mortality fell more than 16 percent between 2015 and 2017, officially beating the WHO's target to reduce HCV mortality by 10 percent by 2020.

Experts credit the country's success to major efforts to increase treatment access across the country as well as the efficacy of new direct-acting antiviral medications. England has specifically focused on people with more advanced liver disease and injection drug users—two of the most at-risk groups for HCV mortality.

Still, the report estimates that of the 113,000 people still living with chronic hepatitis C in England in 2018, about 79,000 were still unaware of their infection. Scientists say much more needs to be done to hit the WHO's other targets of reducing chronic hepatitis C infection by 80 percent and reducing HCV mortality by 65 percent worldwide by 2030.

In a press release about the achievement, PHE said its goal is to stem transmission of the virus by expanding testing and treatment and promoting harm reduction.

To learn more about the WHO's hepatitis C elimination goals, click here.

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