Woefully Inadequate Global Response to Viral Hepatitis

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A report from the Economist Intelligence Unit outlines the inadequate governmental response to the viral hepatitis epidemic around the globe and urges major action to address the escalating medical and economic impact of the virus. The report finds that as little as 10 percent of the estimated 150 million people living with hep C worldwide are currently receiving antiviral treatment.

Urging more effective disease surveillance programs, the report found that 16 countries in the European Union have either poor or nonexistent data about the epidemic. In calling for greater public awareness about the virus, the report cites the findings of a European Liver Patients Association survey: Only one in five of those with either hep B or C had ever heard of each virus before their diagnosis. The report further calls for improved prevention efforts as well as progress in reaching out to those living with viral hepatitis and in getting them into treatment before they experience serious liver damage.

Charles Gore, chief executive of the Hepatitis C Trust in London, says, “I’m appalled by how little attention is paid to viral hepatitis. It’s of the same magnitude as HIV, TB and malaria. And yet we’ve never had anywhere approaching the level of profile, awareness and resources that have been thrown at the other three communicable diseases.”

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