Universal Hepatitis C Treatment Program in Europe's Georgia Shows Promise

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A universal hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment program in the country of Georgia is showing major promise as a potential model for liver disease treatment as prevention. Organized by Gilead Sciences and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the case study hopes to prove that new, highly effective cures have the potential to eradicate the virus in global populations, Business Insider reports.

Georgia, a country in Eastern Europe with a population of 3.7 million people, currently has the third highest hepatitis C virus rate in the world, with close to 8 percent of the population affected. Recently, the country took on an ambitious public health effort aiming to reduce its hepatitis C prevalence by 90 percent by 2020.

To help achieve this, Gilead Sciences and the CDC launched a massive case study in the country, supplying the HCV cure Harvoni (sofosbuvir/ledipasvir) free of charge to HCV-positive Georgians. The project started in April 2015; since then, close to 8,500 people (of approximately 285,000 Georgians living with hepatitis C) have been treated. An additional 27,000 people have been enrolled in the program and are awaiting treatment.

According to Gilead Sciences, Georgia's small population, high HCV prevalence and preexisting medical infrastructure made it ideal for the experiment. Ultimately, the goal of the study is to prove to governments and health agencies around the world the degree to which investing in new hepatitis C treatments can help change the global landscape of hepatitis C.

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