World Hepatitis Day 2024

This year's World Hepatitis Day theme is "It's time for action."

July 22, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Sunday, July 28, marks World Hepatitis Day 2024, which aims to raise awareness of viral hepatitis, a condition affecting about 304 million people worldwide, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

This year's theme, "It's time for action," urges accelerated action regarding prevention, diagnosis and treatment to improve health outcomes and save lives.

Viral hepatitis attacks the liver, which acts as the body's filter. In fact, hepatitis means "inflammation of the liver." When untreated, it can lead to scarring of the liver (cirrhosis), liver cancer, the need for a liver transplantand death.

Hepatitis can be caused by several factors, including toxins, excess alcohol use, autoimmune diseases, fat in the liver and viruses, including the three most common ones: hepatitis A, B and C. (The other two main strains are D and E.) Combined, hepatitis B (HVB) and C (HCV) are responsible for an estimated 1.3 million deaths annually.

Effective vaccines are available for hep A and B. What's more, HCV is curable in most cases; however, HBV is not.

Ahead of World Hepatitis Day, the World Hepatitis Alliance is hosting several webinars featuring expert discussions on ways to expand access to HBV vaccines, improve testing, achieve hepatitis elimination goals and more. Click here to register for "WHD 2024: Turning the Tide for Hepatitis," which takes place July 23.

It was previously estimated that about 2.4 million U.S. adults were living with HCV. Using a new model that better accounts for people who inject drugs, a new paper, published in Hepatology, found that, in fact, approximately 4 million people are living with HCV in the United States.

“The results of this paper demonstrate the dire need for national action and resources for hepatitis C testing, treatment and surveillance that, in turn, can support our national hepatitis C elimination goals,” said study coauthor Eric Hall, PhD, an assistant professor of epidemiology in the Oregon Health and Science University–Portland State University School of Public Health in an interview with HepVu.

This World Hepatitis Day, the WHO emphasizes the need to prioritize treatment and vaccination to meet its 2030 elimination targets. The organization suggests expanding access to testing and diagnostics, improving community-based services, education and more. It also encourages the integration of hepatitis care within existing primary care settings to offer comprehensive care in a more accessible way.

To learn more, click #Viral Hepatitis. There, you’ll find headlines such as “WHO Sounds Alarm on Viral Hepatitis Infections Claiming 3,500 Lives Each Day,” “New Report Flags Major Increase in STIs, Amidst Challenges in HIV and Hepatitis” and “Hepatitis Surveillance Systems Lack Funding.”

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