



World Hepatitis Summit Urges Global Elimination of Viral Hepatitis

As unexplained hepatitis cases in children rise globally, countries must unite to eliminate viral hepatitis.

June 13, 2022 By Laura Schmidt

The World Hepatitis Summit 2022 will renew commitments with global partners to eliminate [viral hepatitis](#) worldwide by 2030.

Since the 2016 World Health Assembly, countries have succeeded in reducing the incidence of [hepatitis B](#) in children under 5 and increasing the number of people receiving treatment for [hepatitis C](#) 10-fold.

However, whether due to lack of awareness or political commitment or [stigma](#), most countries failed to meet other 2020 targets, including timely access to the birth dose of the hepatitis B vaccine, which is low in many low- and middle-income countries.

What's more, the 2030 deadline for the elimination of viral hepatitis is looming.

An estimated 354 million people around the world live with hepatitis and over 1 million deaths occur every year—more than HIV and malaria deaths combined.

"Hepatitis is one of the most devastating diseases on earth, but it's also one of the most preventable and treatable, with services that can be delivered easily and cheaply at the primary health care level," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, PhD, the director-general of the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), [said in a news release](#).

The emergence of about 700 cases of unexplained acute hepatitis in younger children in 34 countries has heightened the sense of urgency around this year's summit. Symptoms of acute hepatitis tend to appear quickly, leading to an increased number of children developing liver failure, including some who have require liver transplants.

The WHO [Global Health Sector Strategy on viral hepatitis, 2022-2030](#), which includes strategies for keeping countries on track to eliminate viral hepatitis, is expected to figure prominently in this year's summit.

“Many of the reasons people miss out on those services are the same reasons they miss out on services for other health challenges—accessibility and affordability because of who they are, where they live or how much they earn. We call on all countries to commit to realizing the dream of eliminating viral hepatitis by 2030, as part of a broader commitment to universal health coverage based on strong primary health care,” Tedros said.

To learn more about recent outbreaks, read “[Still Few Answers as Kids’ Hepatitis Outbreak Spreads.](#)”

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