World Looks to Egypt in Fight Against Viral Hepatitis

Egypt's hepatitis elimination campaign inspired nearly 60 million people to get screened.

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A new paper from the World Economic Forum details Egypt's success in fighting viral hepatitis, which affects over 300 million people globally. Experts will analyze Egypt's policies and see how they might be implemented in other nations.

Throughout the world, approximately 1.1 million people die of hepatitis B and C every year. The World Health Organization (WHO) has set a goal to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030. If countries increase hepatitis elimination campaigns as Egypt has, nearly 4.5 million deaths could be avoided within the next nine years alone, according to the WHO.

Since its start, Egypt's campaign has screened 60 million people and successfully treated another 4 million.

"Hepatitis C is a disease that can be beaten," said Shyam Bishen, head of health and health care at the World Economic Forum and one of the coauthors of the report, in a World Economic Forum news release. "We can screen and diagnose for it; we can cure it. There is a strong business case for nearly every country in the world, and Egypt has shown that even the highest-burden countries can make incredible progress in a very short time frame with enough political commitment."

Thanks to continued political support and partnerships involving the public and private sectors as well as local nonprofits and international organizations, Egypt has managed to make treatment easier to access and more affordable. The World Economic Forum emphasizes that this level and kind of support is vital if attempts to eliminate viral hepatitis are to succeed.

"Ultimately, there are many major health challenges that cannot yet be overcome," said Bishen. "But viral hepatitis is not one of them. The world has everything it needs to eliminate the disease. It is clear now that we just need the will to do it."

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