

# Hepatitis C: think globally, act locally

Meeting the World Health Organization elimination targets is achievable with a strategic, inclusive and holistic approach to hepatitis C care.

## THE ISSUE

The World Health Organization (WHO) has set a target for elimination of hepatitis C as a public health threat by 2030.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT OUR WORK FOUND

In a commentary published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, Professor Margaret Hellard and colleagues provide an overview of hepatitis C treatment, prevention measures and barriers to be addressed in order to meet the WHO elimination targets.

- ▶ Effective and well tolerated hepatitis C treatment is now available, but complementary measures are required to optimise access to hepatitis C care and prevent future disease transmission.
- ▶ Hepatitis C treatment uptake can be facilitated by providing treatment in the primary care setting.
- ▶ Cost is the key barrier to treatment in some countries.
- ▶ People who inject drugs (PWID) are at high risk of infection and an important focus for elimination. To achieve elimination, it is important to:
  - ensure that current PWID are not excluded from treatment.
  - prevent new and recurrent infections with harm reduction measures, such as opioid substitution therapy and needle/syringe exchange.
  - focus treatment efforts on local areas and injecting networks to efficiently reduce prevalence and prevent further transmission using treatment as prevention.
- ▶ Principles of treating PWID can be applied to other high-risk networks, such as HIV/hepatitis C co-infected people, and infection clusters in villages and towns or within families.

## CONCLUSION

Achievement of the WHO hepatitis C targets is feasible with a 'think globally, act locally' approach, supporting inclusive access to effective treatment and harm reduction measures.

### References

1. World Health Organization. Global health sector strategy on viral hepatitis 2016-2021. Available from: <https://www.who.int/hepatitis/strategy-2016-2021/ghs-hep/en/>



## Policy Implications

- ▶ Treatment alone is insufficient to eliminate hepatitis C; complementary measures are needed to ensure that WHO elimination targets are met.
- ▶ Providing treatment without prejudice, and offering harm reduction measures to people who are at greatest risk of infection, such as PWID, is key to achieving elimination.
- ▶ Providing treatment to people in high-risk networks is important in achieving elimination in many countries.

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