

Foreword

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Having actively engaged in clinical practice, teaching and scientific research in hepatobiliary surgery for more than three decades, the elimination of viral hepatitis holds a special place in my heart.

I am thrilled to see the publication of the Hong Kong Viral Hepatitis Action Plan 2025-2030, which builds on the significant progress made under the previous Action Plan, reaffirming our steadfast commitment to combating viral hepatitis as a public health threat in Hong Kong.

Viral hepatitis, particularly those caused by hepatitis B and C virus infections, can lead to severe liver diseases, including cirrhosis and liver cancer. As derived from the Population Health Survey 2020-22, there are approximately 410 000 people (about 5.6% of the Hong Kong population) living with chronic hepatitis B and 17 000 with chronic hepatitis C. Liver cancer is the fifth most common cancer and the third leading cause of cancer deaths in Hong Kong, accounting for approximately 1600 new cases and claiming the lives of more than 1400 citizens each year. More than 80% of the primary liver cancer cases were related to infection with hepatitis B and hepatitis C virus.

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is determined to eliminate the public health threats posed by viral hepatitis through implementing comprehensive and timely interventions. The implementation of the universal neonatal hepatitis B vaccination programme in 1988 has significantly reduced the prevalence of hepatitis B in the younger generation to less than 1%. Meanwhile, the use of maternal antiviral prophylaxis and post-vaccination serologic testing were introduced in 2020 and 2022 respectively, further strengthening our mother-to-child transmission prevention effort to realise a hepatitis B-free generation.



Despite these advancements, a significant portion of our local population with hepatitis B remains undiagnosed or unlinked to care. The latest reform of primary care in Hong Kong presents a timely opportunity to enhance hepatitis B screening. This Action Plan emphasises the importance of expanding access to hepatitis B testing, particularly in primary care and community settings, to ensure early diagnosis and timely interventions and treatments.

Aligned with the *Global health sector strategies on, respectively, HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections for the period 2022-2030* published by the World Health Organization, this Action Plan outlines four strategic axes, namely raising awareness, tracking health sector response, preventing new infections, and expanding access to screening, care, and treatment. These strategies aim to bridge existing gaps and ensure access to appropriate care, treatment and support for all individuals at risk of or living with viral hepatitis.

Achieving these goals demands collaboration across sectors. We called for unified efforts from government agencies (including the Hospital Authority), academia, and community-based organisations, to drive systematic improvements and meet the WHO's targets.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Steering Committee on Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis and all the partners involved in the development and implementation of this Action Plan. Your unwavering commitment and tireless efforts are crucial to our continued success.

Let us continue to work together towards eliminating viral hepatitis and safeguarding public health.