

Preface



Dr. Constance CHAN Hon-ye, JP
Director of Health

Viral hepatitis is a global public health problem affecting the lives of millions of people. In Hong Kong, it is estimated that around 540 000 people and 22 000 people are chronically infected with hepatitis B and hepatitis C virus respectively. Chronic hepatitis is a silent killer. People who suffer from the infections may be asymptomatic for many years until they are presented with cirrhosis and liver cancer. This results in missed opportunities to seek and receive the appropriate treatment.

The commitment of the Government to meet the World Health Organization (WHO) goal of eliminating viral hepatitis as a major health threat by 2030 has led to the formulation of this Action Plan, spelling out details on how it would be delivered.

We have engaged with various stakeholders to step up our coordinated efforts by adopting the WHO's four-axis framework of action: awareness, surveillance, prevention and treatment, with the aim of reducing transmission of viral hepatitis and the morbidity and mortality attributed to it.

Much has already been achieved in preventing the transmission of viral hepatitis, especially hepatitis B, in Hong Kong since the 1980s. In order to realise an "HBV free generation", there is still a lot of work to be done to provide the necessary quality and timely care. It would not be possible without the commitment from the Government and the hard work and dedication of healthcare staff.

The success of the plan requires concerted effort from various sectors. It is time to join hands to achieve viral hepatitis elimination!



Dr. Tony KO Pat-sing
Chief Executive, Hospital Authority

Chronic hepatitis by viral hepatitis B or C remains a territory-wide health issue of Hong Kong. Without proper linkage to care and monitoring, many will develop serious complications including cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma and liver failure, which in turns add to the ever-rising demand of the healthcare system. The Hospital Authority (HA) has been working closely with the Department of Health in planning and implementing initiatives in order to achieve the goals set out by the World Health Organization.

To augment the capacity in managing patients with viral hepatitis, HA will continue to strengthen ourselves in various aspects including manpower, equipment, laboratory support and drug. Hepatitis nurse clinics have been set up to alleviate pressure of specialist outpatient clinics and clinical pathway to prevent mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B virus was established. In addition, HA has gradually widened the coverage of direct-acting antivirals in order to treat all patients with chronic hepatitis C. To facilitate management of patients in the community setting in the long run, collaboration between specialists and primary care physicians will be explored.

To tie in with HA's mission of "Helping People Stay Healthy", this action plan will improve patient access to viral hepatitis treatment and care, ultimately increasing the cure rate of hepatitis C and preventing the progression and development of complications for hepatitis B.

Addressing the challenges of chronic viral hepatitis will require continuous collaboration among different stakeholders from both the public and private healthcare sectors. Through our dedication and collective effort in implementing the action plan, let us join hands targeting to make Hong Kong free from chronic viral hepatitis in the foreseeable future.