

Formulation of the first viral hepatitis action plan in Hong Kong

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BACKGROUND

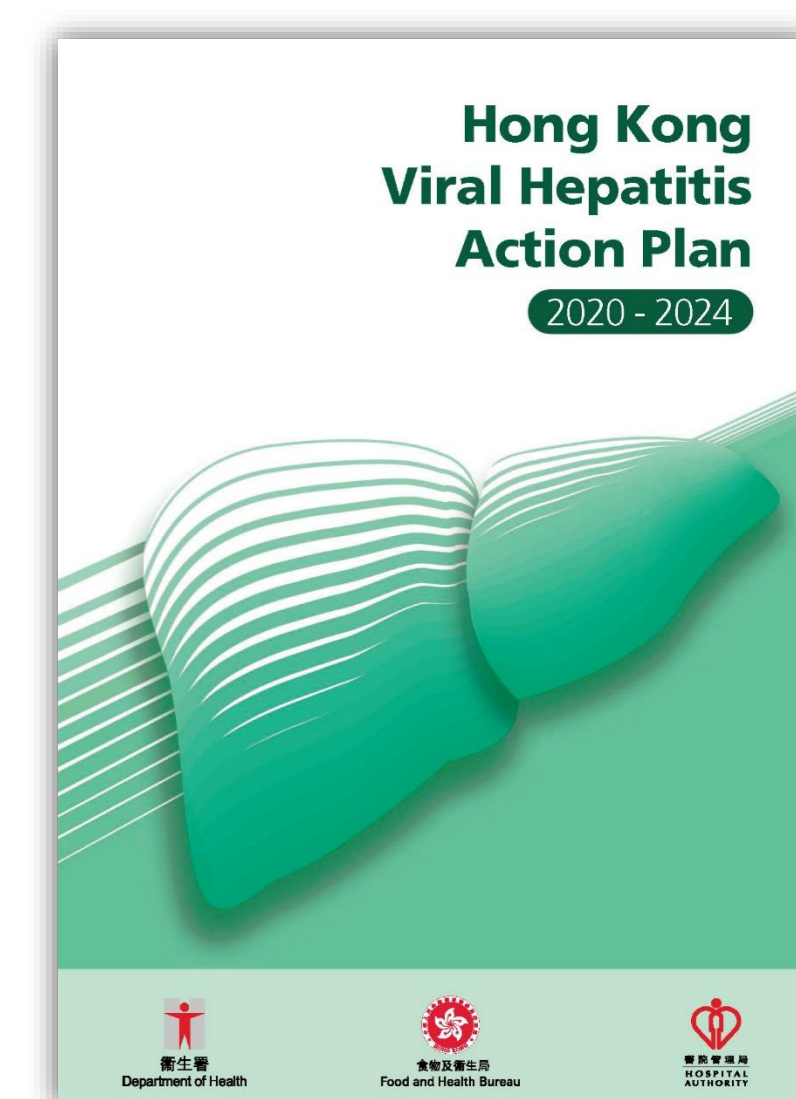
- Viral hepatitis poses a significant public health burden in Hong Kong, home to about 7.5 million population.

7.2%
of population
(~540 000 people)
infected with HBV

0.3%
of population
(~22 000 people)
infected with HCV

OBJECTIVES

- To formulate the first action plan to reduce the transmission of viral hepatitis and lower its morbidity and mortality in Hong Kong, with a view to reaching the WHO targets for elimination of viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030.



METHODS

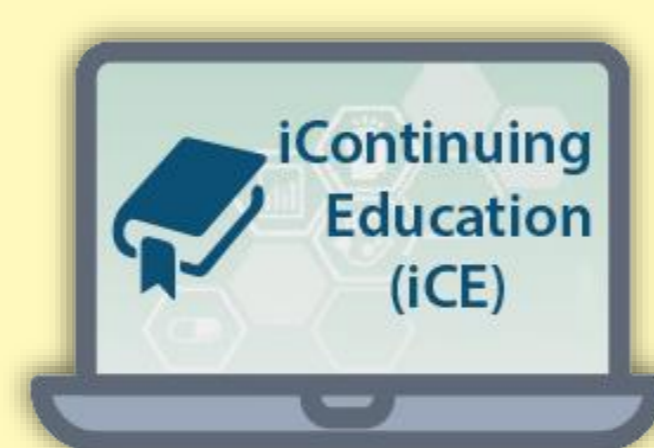
- The Steering Committee on Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis (SCVH) was established in 2018.
- Membership comprises representatives of academia, experts in different medical specialties, public healthcare providers and Government officials.
- The SCVH meets regularly to advise the Government on the overall policy, targeted strategies and effective resource allocation related to the prevention and control of viral hepatitis.

RESULTS / OUTCOMES

- In October 2020, the SCVH formulated *the Hong Kong Viral Hepatitis Action Plan 2020 – 2024*, which adopts four strategic axes: raising awareness, enhancing surveillance, promoting prevention and expanding access to treatment.

Strategy 1: Raising Awareness

- Launch awareness campaign for the general population
 - Telephone hotline, internet, printed materials, health talks, social media, advertising on buses and health promotion activities via community partners
- Provide professional training
 - Enhance the capacity of healthcare workers to deliver quality care to patients with hepatitis
- Educate at-risk populations
 - People who inject drugs, pregnant women with chronic hepatitis B, patients and their service providers
- Build supportive environment
 - Foster an environment for effective management of viral hepatitis cases



Strategy 3: Promoting Prevention

- Continue universal screening for pregnant women and childhood vaccination for hepatitis B
 - Screen pregnant women for hepatitis B during each pregnancy
 - Give 3-dose hepatitis B vaccination to all babies
 - Administer hepatitis B immunoglobulin within 24 hours after birth for babies born to HBV-infected mothers
- Use antivirals for preventing MTCT of HBV
 - Test viral load for pregnant women infected with HBV
 - Provide a treatment option to use antivirals for pregnant women with high viral load in the third trimester
 - Provide long-term management of the liver condition for pregnant women infected with HBV
- Post-vaccination serologic testing
 - Test for hepatitis B antibody and infection status after 3-dose vaccination for babies born to HBV-infected mothers
 - Assess the need for revaccination
 - Enable early management for HBV-infected babies
- Prevent healthcare related transmission of HBV & HCV
 - Continue current effective blood safety strategies
 - Uphold infection control standards
- Reduce the risk and disease burden in vulnerable populations
 - Intensify condom programming
 - Undertake harm reduction approach



Strategy 2: Enhancing surveillance

- Conduct ongoing surveillance
 - Notification system for acute viral hepatitis
 - Prevalence assessment for chronic viral hepatitis
- Develop local indicators
 - Monitor and evaluate the elimination strategies



Strategy 4: Expanding Access to Treatment

- Enhancement of treatment for hepatitis B
 - Enhancement in the Hospital Authority (HA) on hepatitis B management in four areas
- Explore strategies in the long run to sustain and expand the service provision for hepatitis in both public and private sectors



- Expansion of access to direct-acting antivirals (DAA) for HCV
 - Expand the HA Drug Formulary indication for DAA therapy on all patients, regardless of their disease severity
- Micro-elimination of HCV infection
 - Screen and treat patients on renal dialysis
 - Screen and treat HIV-positive patients
- Promotion of HCV testing in people who inject drugs
 - Provide specific educational information about HCV transmission
 - Identify testing options and algorithms for carrying out HCV testing



CONCLUSIONS / LESSONS LEARNT

- The Action Plan sets out the concrete actions and timeline of the implementation of various actions by the local health authority, public healthcare providers and other stakeholders, and formulates goals and priority actions for individual strategies to drive the progress in eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat.