

Topic: Developing and implementing elimination plans (national, state or local level)
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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, where an estimated 540 000 and 22 000 people are having hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection respectively.

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 World Health Organization (WHO) targets for elimination of viral hepatitis as a public health problem by 2030.

Methods: The Steering Committee on Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis (SCVH) was established in 2018. Membership comprised representatives of academia, experts in different medical specialties, public healthcare providers and Government officials. The SCVH met 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 (the Action Plan) with reference to the recommendations from WHO, international practices and local situation. The Action Plan adopts four strategic axes, namely raising awareness, enhancing surveillance, promoting prevention and expanding access to treatment, and formulates priority actions for each axis. As set out in the Action Plan, new initiatives on using antivirals for preventing mother-to-child transmission of HBV and post-vaccination serologic testing would be introduced. The Action Plan also outlines a series of actions to enhance hepatitis B treatment capacity, expand access to direct-acting antivirals for hepatitis C patients, achieve micro-elimination of HCV infection in dialysis populations and HIV-positive patients, and promote HCV testing and linkage to care among people who inject drugs. A set of 12 local indicators have been newly developed for close monitoring of the progress towards the WHO 2030 targets.

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.

Disclosure of Interest: None declared