

Current Health Event

World Hepatitis Day

28 July— On World Hepatitis Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) is urging countries to take rapid action to improve knowledge about the disease, and to increase access to testing and treatment services. Today, only 1 in 20 people with viral hepatitis know they have it. And just 1 in 100 with the disease is being treated.

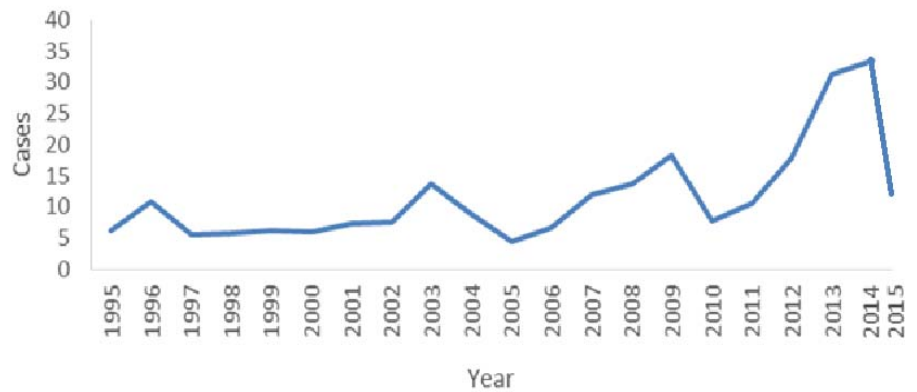
Editorial note:

Viral hepatitis – a group of infectious diseases known as hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E – affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, causing acute and chronic liver disease and killing close to 1.5 million people every year, mostly from hepatitis B and C. These infections can be prevented, but most people don't know how.

Lebanon has put in place good hepatitis prevention and control measures. Hepatitis B vaccination is routinely given to all newborns and it is part of the childhood vaccinations national calendar. Health workers are all vaccinated for hepatitis B. In response to increased hepatitis A infections, awareness campaigns were launched to educate people on hygiene. And efforts to ensure safe water supplies are accelerated in particular in those areas most affected by water shortages and hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees.

Moreover, treatment for hepatitis B and C is available and the government subsidizes treatment for poor uninsured populations.

Figure: Reported rate per 100 000 of suspected, probable and confirmed hepatitis A cases, total population (including Palestinian and Syrian refugees), Lebanon, 1995 - 2015. Source: MoPH, 2015.



It is also to note that the Ministry of Public Health has been very vigilant, along with all the blood banks in the country, in ensuring safe blood transfusion for more than two decades.

However, due to the crisis in Syria, a population of much more than one million additional people is in need of hepatitis prevention and control measures including vaccination, hygiene, infection control, safe blood transfusions, early diagnosis and treatment.

The date of 28 July was chosen for World Hepatitis Day in honor of the birthday of Nobel Laureate Professor Baruch Samuel Blumberg, discoverer of the hepatitis B virus and developer of the first hepatitis B vaccine.

WHO urges the government, nongovernmental organizations, physicians and the pharmaceutical industry to work together to make the new very effective treatments for chronic hepatitis C available and affordable to patients in Lebanon, as the price for these medicines has been prohibitively high. WHO reiterates its support to Lebanon's hepatitis prevention and control efforts.

Cumulative Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon*

Disease	2015	2016**	June	July
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
AFP	75(9)	60 (6)	4 (0)	7 (1)
Measles	37(11)	28 (11)	7 (6)	0 (0)
Mumps	1400 (337)	418 (64)	49 (11)	1 (1)
Pertussis	37(6)	31 (8)	3 (1)	0 (0)
Rabies	0(0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Rubella	9(1)	5 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Tetanus	3(0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Viral Hep. B	140(22)	182 (23)	16 (4)	0 (0)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	333(57)	177 (70)	40 (17)	10 (2)
Cholera	0(0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Hydatid cyst	14(1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Typhoid fever	473(50)	238 (1)	45 (0)	27 (1)
Viral Hep. A	877(159)	155 (22)	21 (2)	11 (2)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	32(23)	12 (11)	6 (5)	0 (0)
Meningitis	309(53)	278 (31)	42 (4)	25 (4)
Viral Hep C	65(3)	42 (4)	6 (1)	0 (0)

*Numbers in brackets refer to Syrian **as of 29 July 2016