

Current Health Event

World Hepatitis Day

On World Hepatitis Day, 28 July, WHO and partners will urge policy-makers, health workers and the public to act now to prevent infection and death from hepatitis. In Lebanon the annual incidence of hepatitis A has been increasing since 2012.

Editorial note:

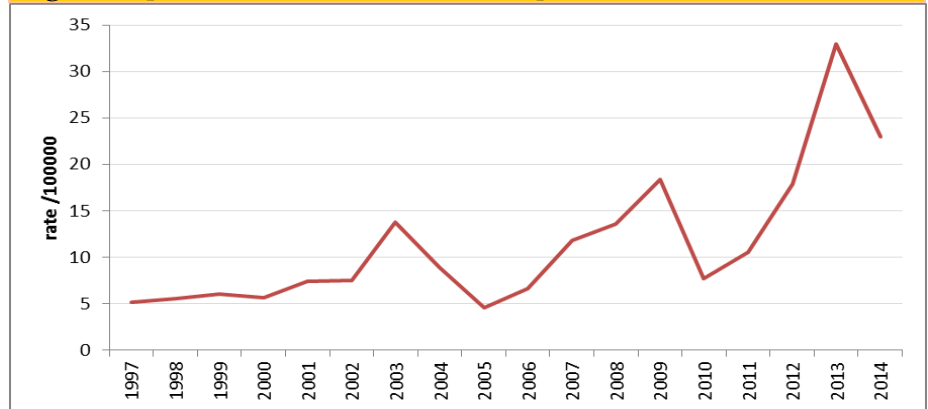
Viral hepatitis – a group of infectious diseases known as hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E – affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide, causing acute and chronic liver disease and killing close to 1.5 million people every year, mostly from hepatitis B and C. These infections can be prevented, but most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

In Lebanon, hepatitis A incidence has reached 33/100000 in 2013 compared to numbers ranging between 5 and 18 before 2011. For 2014, the annualized incidence rate of HAV was 23/100000.

With the displacement of Syrians to Lebanon following the crisis in Syria, two populations with different endemicity levels started to co-exist in Lebanon. In 2014, infections were reported from Syrian refugees (with a high proportion of children) and among the Lebanese population (with a higher proportion of older age groups). The reported rate was three times higher for Syrian refugees in general than Lebanese.

The highest number of cases and the second highest rate were reported from Baalbek district which hosts a large number of Syrian refugees.

Figure: Reported annual incidence of viral hepatitis A, Lebanon, 1997-2014



Source: Ministry of Public Health, Lebanon (for 2014: annualized rate)

Last December, an expert group comprising of MoPH, WHO, European CDC and EPIET experts analyzed the available information on the hepatitis A incidence, patterns of the hepatitis A outbreaks and population coverage of hepatitis A vaccination. Based on this analysis a strategy for enhanced immunization was proposed. Recommendations included the inclusion of hepatitis A vaccination in the childhood vaccination calendar as a two-dose vaccine regimen.

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.

The mission team also recommended further promoting hand hygiene practices and reinforcing water and sanitation access and quality monitoring. The MoPH, WHO and other UN agencies are intensifying health promotion activities in terms of hygiene, provision of safe food and water and sanitation.

Cumulative Notifiable diseases in Lebanon (Syrian)				
Disease	2014	2015 Cumul*	Jun	Jul
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Acute Flaccid Paralysis	53(16)	53(5)	11(1)	2(0)
Measles	235(107)	25(5)	5(0)	1(0)
Mumps	736(117)	1187(262)	187(53)	35(11)
Pertussis	87(25)	24(5)	1(0)	2(0)
Rabies	1(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Rubella	18(12)	6(1)	1(1)	0(0)
Tetanus	0(0)	1(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Viral Hep B	218(33)	128(22)	21(6)	0(0)
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	252(36)	115(26)	16(4)	4(0)
Cholera	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Hydatid cyst	16(2)	13(1)	2(0)	0(0)
Typhoid Fever	546(33)	196(17)	21(0)	3(0)
Viral Hep A	2582(911)	580(121)	47(8)	13(2)
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	663(638)	27(19)	5(5)	0(0)
Meningitis	232(35)	213(38)	43(6)	13(1)
Viral Hep C	100(6)	62(3)	10(1)	0(0)

Source: Ministry of Public Health as of 24 July 2015