WHO has provided technical support to the Ministry of Health and Population in drafting a 5-year communication strategy and implementation plan to combat hepatitis C. The plan details communication goals, objectives, target audiences, messages, channels, as well as short- and long-term performance indicators.

Development of the communication plan began with a thorough investigation of the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of the population. The first step in its implementation was the conducting of 3 national KAP surveys for hepatitis C patients, the general public and health care providers. This phase was completed by the middle of 2015.

Key results of KAP surveys

The 3 surveys identified serious deficiencies in the knowledge and understanding of practices to prevent hepatitis C infection among all 3 target audiences. Furthermore, findings of the surveys showed that rumours and misinformation abound regarding the ways in which hepatitis C is transmitted. This may result in the stigmatization of patients and development of unjustified negative attitudes towards patients with hepatitis C. Finally, a major finding was that a significant percentage of patients are unaware that they are infected. This represents a special challenge as if people are unaware of their status they will delay the start of any necessary treatment or lifestyle changes that could save their lives, but it also means that they may unknowingly transmit the virus to others.

Media campaign

The KAP results indicated that a nationwide mass education campaign was urgently needed. WHO, in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Population, selected 5 priority messages and produced them into 5 television spots, 5 radio spots, a leaflet, and a poster. Popular Egyptian movie star Mohamed Henidi kindly donated his time to provide the voice-over for the spots.

The campaign materials show all sectors of society working hand in hand: patients, health care providers and family members. They are all united under the slogan “It’s either virus C or us!” Each television and radio spot addressed a specific message derived from the research.

- **Spot 1: Get a test for hepatitis C if you have had surgery, blood transfusion or schistosomiasis injections.**
- **Spot 2: If you have hepatitis C, register your name on the hccv.org.eg website to receive treatment.**
- **Spot 3: Avoid hepatitis C infection – do not share injection or personal grooming equipment.**
- **Spot 4: Routine contact with hepatitis C patients does not transmit the virus.**
- **Spot 5: Avoid unnecessary as well as unsafe injections, and use oral medicine, whenever possible.**

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World Hepatitis Day 2015

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