



5 December 2018 – Afghanistan has substantial hepatitis prevalence, particularly among injecting drug users, men and women with high risk behaviours, and refugees migrating from the neighbouring countries of Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. From 2011 to June 2018, a total of 1 291 080 hepatitis C virus (HCV) tests were carried out and 18 089 positive tests reported. A majority of the positive tests were reported from drop-in centres (35.1%) and blood banks (34.8%) where blood donor testing is carried out before blood collection.

Dr Mohammad Sadeq Naeemi, a trainer and infectious disease specialist, who has been working at the Infectious and Epidemic Diseases Hospital in Kabul for almost 30 years, said “At this time, from almost all hospitals around Kabul, hepatitis patients are referred to our hospital and some patients come directly, where they receive initial care. We have limited resources and we are not up-to-date with our skills to effectively respond to these cases. We are hopeful that with more support from the Ministry of Public Health and other partners we can do better”.

The Afghanistan National Programme for Control of AIDS, Sexually Transmitted Infections and Hepatitis of the Ministry of Public Health plans to provide hepatitis C treatment with technical support from the World Health Organization (WHO).

“During 2018–2020, it is planned to treat 20 000 affected people. WHO is providing technical support to the Ministry of Public Health to train clinicians on hepatitis C management in order to initiate treatment in the public health sector. Dr Huma Qureshi and Dr Hassan Mahmood, WHO Consultants, have provided technical guidance in developing hepatitis C testing and treatment guidelines. A two-day workshop was conducted in Kabul to finalize the guidelines,” said Dr Supriya Warusavithana, Programme Manager, WHO Afghanistan.

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