



Hepatitis viruses A, B, C, D and E can cause acute and chronic infection and inflammation of the liver that can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. 25 July 2012 – World Hepatitis Day will be celebrated globally on 28 July 2013 under the slogan of: “This is hepatitis. Know it. Confront it”. The campaign emphasizes the fact that hepatitis remains largely unknown as a health threat in much of the world.

Viral hepatitis is a group of infectious diseases causing inflammation of the liver. There are five main types of hepatitis virus – A, B, C, D and E – which affect hundreds of millions of people worldwide. This year, World Hepatitis Day focuses on raising awareness of these different forms of hepatitis, how they are transmitted, who is at risk and the various methods of prevention and treatment.

Approximately 1 million people die each year from related complications, most commonly from liver diseases, including liver cancer. In the Region, approximately 17 million people are living with hepatitis C virus infection and approximately 4.3 million people are infected with hepatitis B virus every year.

All types of viral hepatitis occur throughout the Region. Some countries in the Region have higher infection rates for hepatitis C and hepatitis E than any other country in the world.

The 2013 campaign aims to promote a coordinated global response to hepatitis targeting adults and young people, government, policy-makers and a range of civil society groups.

Hepatitis is a preventable disease. Effective vaccines are available that can provide life-long protection from hepatitis B infection. The chronic nature of hepatitis B and C calls for a strong focus on screening, care and treatment. However, many countries do not collect or report data on hepatitis and most people who were infected long ago with hepatitis B or C are unaware of their chronic infection. They are at high risk of developing severe chronic liver disease and can unknowingly transmit the infection to other people. For these reasons, it is often referred to as “the silent epidemic”.

World Hepatitis Day is an opportunity to focus attention on what can be done to prevent and control viral hepatitis.

With the efforts of governments to enhance early detection and appropriate management and provide safe food and water the quality of life of millions of people living with this disease can be improved.

Within health facilities, screening of blood and blood products, safe injection practices and clean dental work can significantly reduce the risk of infection from hepatitis B and C.

At the community and individual level, certain harmful behavioural practices, such as reusing razor blades and injection syringes, practising unsafe sex, tattooing and sharing needles by injecting drug addicts all substantially increase the risk of infections with hepatitis B and C virus.

Related links

[Weekly Epidemiological Monitor. Hepatitis: Know it. Confront it. Volume 6, Issue 29, Sunday 21 July 2013](#)

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