

From the Editor's Desk

World Hepatitis Day was celebrated all over the world on 28th July like every year. In 2015, Viral hepatitis accounted for 1.34 million deaths worldwide. Around 257 million people have chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection and 71 million have hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. Causes of death are chronic liver disease (cirrhosis) and hepatocellular carcinoma. The World Health Organization (WHO) has resolved to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030. Elimination has been defined as 65% reduction in mortality and 90% reduction in incidence. Hepatitis A virus (HAV) which is transmitted by contaminated food and water caused 11,000 deaths (0.8% of viral hepatitis mortality) worldwide in 2015. An effective and safe vaccine is available against HAV. About 3.5 percent of global population is infected with HBV, and one percent with HCV. These two infections account for 96% of hepatitis deaths. Unfortunately, 95% of patients infected with HBV and HCV do not know that they are infected. One-fifth of these patients develop end-stage liver disease. Alcohol abuse and HIV infection accelerate progression of liver failure. Both these viruses are transmitted by unsterile injections, unsafe blood transfusions, unprotected sex with infected partners and mother-to-child transmission. With the availability of the safe and effective vaccine, HBV is totally preventable. It needs to be supplemented with ensuring safety of blood transfusions, safe injection practices and diagnosis of asymptomatic carriers of the viruses in the population by robust testing programs. Now effective and safe antiviral drugs, approved by the WHO, are available to treat HBV⁻ and HCV⁻ infected individuals. By eliminating the viruses in the infected individuals with appropriate antiviral drug therapy, we can reduce the source of infections.

Hepatitis D virus (HDV) is also transmitted through parenteral route and usually coinfects those who already have HBV infection. It responds to older interferon-based therapies. Hepatitis E virus (HEV) infection is acquired mostly by contaminated water. About 20 million infections occur every year and estimated 44,000 patients succumb to it. China is believed to have developed a vaccine against HEV.

To summarize, WHO stresses on HBV vaccination, blood safety, injection safety and provision of clean water (in HAV & HEV) as the pillars of viral hepatitis elimination strategy, which can be achieved by 2030 if fully implemented. For this, all-out efforts need to be made by all nations individually and jointly with WHO.

We have pleasure in presenting before our esteemed readers the current issue of MGM Journal of Medical Sciences (MGMJMS) with original papers, review articles, and interesting case reports. We are delighted to note increase in the number of contributors from India and abroad to this scientific journal, submitting quality papers.

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