

WHO publishes viral hepatitis surveillance guide

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On 29 February 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) released its first surveillance guide for hepatitis, 'Technical considerations and case definitions to improve surveillance for viral hepatitis' [1]. The document outlines key actions for improving hepatitis surveillance systems, and provides case definitions for viral hepatitis surveillance.

Viral hepatitis is a global public health problem of epidemic proportions and according to the Global Burden of Disease study [2], it causes approximately 1.46 million deaths each year. New infections caused by the five known hepatitis viruses – A, B, C, D and E (HAV, HBV, HCV, HDV and HEV) can be prevented; however, this relies on surveillance systems generating epidemiological information which is key in preventing and controlling hepatitis epidemics.

In recognition of the burden of viral hepatitis on global health, the World Health Assembly adopted resolutions in 2010 and 2014 [3,4] that called for a comprehensive approach to the prevention and control of viral hepatitis and mandated WHO to work closely with its Member States to develop the necessary guidelines for the surveillance, prevention and control of viral hepatitis.

In response, WHO developed these technical considerations that aim to help develop or strengthen the collection, analysis and reporting of data related to viral hepatitis.

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