Challenges and Victories for World Hepatitis Day 2026

Health professionals, scientists, clinicians and citizens engaged in the fight against hepatitis have found ways to effectively push back.

July 27, 2026 By Chari Cohen

As we commemorate World Hepatitis Day 2026, we at the Hepatitis B Foundation would like to take a moment to reflect on the past 12 months. This past year has been a mixture of progress and setbacks that mimic a roller coaster ride. Globally, the latest World Health Organization Global Hepatitis Report estimated 1.1 million people died from hepatitis B in 2024. And we still lag far behind the 2030 Viral Hepatitis Elimination targets for diagnosis, prevention and treatment, with continued regional disparities. In the United States, we saw our public health infrastructure threatened, funding for scientific research brutally cut off and vaccine confidence and access severely compromised.

At times, the past 12 months have felt discouraging, but public health professionals, scientists, clinicians and citizens who are engaged in the fight against hepatitis have found ways to effectively push back. The hepatitis B and hepatitis D communities have been more engaged than ever, making sure their voices are heard. The community has published articles to ensure that they are meaningfully included in hepatitis B research and programming, served on advisory committees for clinical trials and professional guidelines and shared their perspectives through blogs, podcasts, storytelling videos, mainstream media and conferences that have reached hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Additionally, vaccination proponents, such as Paul Offit, MD, of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, have forcefully countered the rampant disinformation put forth against immunization.

We also have some new, and pretty significant, reasons to be optimistic. A few months ago, GSK reported promising news about its potential new treatment bepirovirsen, which could be the first approved treatment that leads to a functional cure in some people with hepatitis B. This would be transformational for us, not only in the promise of functional cure for many people, but also in injecting new energy into the hepatitis B space — which we hope will trigger enhanced prioritization and resources for hepatitis B screening and care around the world.

And we saw progress toward treating hepatitis D. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Hepcludex from Gilead Sciences as the first drug in the United States to treat hepatitis D. This treatment is now approved in the United States, European Union and United Kingdom,

offering hope and better health outcomes for so many people living with hepatitis D.

We at the Hepatitis B Foundation, a global organization based in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, are proud of the work we have done alongside our partners. Some highlights, in case you missed them:

- We added over 50 new videos to our storytelling program in the past year. David, a young Michigan man who is a passionate storyteller, was recently profiled by a PBS series, Medical Stories. His story set a record for viewers in its first two weeks online.
- We continue to grow the African Hepatitis B Advocacy Coalition, supporting more than 200 strong local partners in 12 countries. One of our catalytic grant recipients in Uganda completed a project that increased hepatitis B screening among pregnant women from 11% to 73% and increased hepatitis B vaccine birth dose coverage from 5% to 65%.
- We partnered with the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to produce three patient-focused educational videos on the hepatitis B vaccine birth dose, which collectively received 29,000+ views.
- We published two social media campaigns debunking dangerous myths around the hepatitis B vaccine, reaching 72,000 people.

On this World Hepatitis Day — observed annually on July 28, the birthday of Baruch S. Blumberg, MD, PhD, a Nobel Prize recipient from Philadelphia — we at the Hepatitis B Foundation renew our commitment to people everywhere living with hepatitis B, hepatitis D and liver cancer. We believe that there's sufficient positive momentum behind our work — and the efforts of our allies and partners — to reach the extremely ambitious challenge of saving lives and eliminating these diseases as public health threats. And while on this journey together, we will continue to celebrate each win and fight each injustice.

Finally, we invite you to visit our website www.hepb.org, which offers valuable information for people living with hepatitis B, those who care about them and health care providers. You also can sign up for our newsletter and find links to our social media.

From all of us at the Hepatitis B Foundation, we wish you a World Hepatitis Day full of reflection, commitment and a chance to celebrate our victories.

This opinion was written by Chari A. Cohen, DrPH, MPH, is president of the Hepatitis B Foundation.

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