Viral Hepatitis Kills More Europeans Than HIV by Tenfold

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European Union citizens die as a result of viral hepatitis at a rate about 10 times greater than deaths related to HIV, according to The Global Burden of Disease Study 2010 (GBD 2010). These results from the periodic study, which is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and coordinated by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington in Seattle, were presented at the 49th annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) in London.

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) contributed to an estimated 57,000 deaths in the EU in 2010, while hepatitis B virus (HBV) contributed to an estimated 31,000 deaths, for a combined total of about 88,000. Just over 8,000 EU citizens died from complications to do with AIDS.

“GBD 2010 is making a critical contribution to our understanding of present and future health priorities for countries and the global community,” EASL vice secretary Laurent Castera, MD, PhD, from the department of hepatology at the Hôpital Beaujon in Paris, said at the meeting. “Although HIV/AIDS undeniably remains a key global health priority, the higher mortality from viral hepatitis than from HIV/AIDS in the EU means that hepatitis B and C must clearly now be counted among the top global and local priorities for health.”

On a global scale, both HIV- and viral hepatitis-related death rates increased between 1990 and 2010. By the latter year, HIV was the sixth leading cause of death with 1.47 million deaths, and the combination of hep B and C was the ninth leading cause of death with 1.29 million deaths.

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