Worldwide Liver Cancer Deaths Have Almost Doubled Since 1990

These rates are driven in large part by hepatitis B and C.

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The annual number of liver cancer–related deaths worldwide has increased by about 80 percent since 1990, a shift driven in large part by hepatitis B and C viruses (HBV/HCV). Liver cancer is now second only to lung cancer as a major cause of all cancer deaths worldwide.

According to the recently published Global Burden of Disease study, 830,000 people died of liver cancer in 2016, compared with 464,000 people in 1990. Two thirds of the deaths in the most recent year were related to HBV or HCV infection.

More than 325 million people worldwide are living with hep B or C or both viruses.

Hep C was the cause of an estimated 160,000 liver-related deaths in 2016.

Along with Japan and China, the United States has the highest numbers of people living with HCV. Among baby boomers, those born between 1945 and 1965, 2.6 percent are estimated to have hep C, a rate six times that of other U.S. adults.

Despite the fact that highly effective treatments for hep C have been available for about four years now, just 3 million out of 71 million people living with the virus worldwide have received such direct-acting antiviral medications during the past two years.

An additional 350,000 global liver cancer deaths in 2016 were the result of hep B. Eighty percent of these cases were in China and India.

HBV is preventable with a vaccine and treatable (but unlike hep C not readily curable) with medications. About half of all nations provide the hep B vaccine to newborns.

To read a press release about the study, click here.

To access the report's data click here and here.

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