

India ranks 2nd in Hepatitis B cases

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India ranks 2nd in Hepatitis B patients



India has over 40 million Hepatitis B infected patients, second only to China, and most people with chronic Hepatitis B or C are unaware of their infection, putting them at serious risk of developing cirrhosis or liver cancer which are life threatening.

As India observes World Hepatitis Day tomorrow, the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) based in New Delhi has painted a grim picture on the prevalence of various forms of Hepatitis infection in the country and efforts to check it, saying the country's collective efforts in this field are "limited and painfully lagging behind".

Every year, nearly 600,000 patients die from HBV infection in the region but the government does not yet have national policies relating to screening and referral for Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, it said.

Hepatitis B is a serious global health problem, responsible for 1.4 million deaths every year compared to 1.5 million deaths from HIV/AIDS and 1.2 million from each of malaria and TB, the ILBS said. "India has over 40 million hepatitis B (HBV) infected patients (second only to China) and constitutes about 15 percent of the entire pool of hepatitis B in the world.

"Tribal areas in India have high prevalence of hepatitis B. Every year, nearly 600,000 patients die from HBV infection in the Indian continent," the ILBS statement said.

"There has been lot of talk about Hepatitis and its adverse effect and its now time for action. Our aim is to rid India of all forms of Hepatitis infections by 2080," ILBS director Mr Shiv Sarin said.

On the occasion of World Hepatitis Day 2014, ILBS in partnership with the WHO India is organizing the first ever consultation meeting on 'Viral Hepatitis In India'—'Gaps, Challenges and Priorities' on July 28.

This year's theme, 'Think Again' acknowledges that "we do not know nearly enough about viral hepatitis as a health threat in much of the world", it said.

The study also said that Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is responsible for 10-30 percent of acute hepatitis and 5-15 percent of acute liver failure cases in India and there is a vaccine available for HA

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