

**Prevention and control of
viral hepatitis in Greece:
Lessons learnt and the way
forward**

**Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board Meeting
Athens, Greece, November 15-16, 2007**

The Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board

15 years of support to the control and prevention
of viral hepatitis in Europe.

Content

- Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB)
- VHPB activities
- Hepatitis B control in Europe

Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board

- The objective of VHPB is to contribute to the control and prevention of viral hepatitis
 - by drawing the attention to this important public health problem
 - by issuing prevention guidelines
 - and by encouraging actions to improve control and prevention.
- VHPB focus audiences are, in first instance, opinion leaders, policymakers, and health care professionals.

Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board

- VHPB is established in 1992. First actions related to hepatitis B as an occupational risk.
- World Health Assembly sets in 1992 Hepatitis B Vaccination targets on the integration of hepatitis B vaccine into national childhood vaccination programmes.
- In 1993, VHPB started a second major initiative and focused on hepatitis B as a community health risk.
- The geographical focus was initially Western Europe, its actions are extended to include all 53 countries in the WHO/EURO

Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board

- members
 - CDC, WHO/HQ, WHO/EURO, MOH, Universities
- network of experts

Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board

- Meetings
 - 2 - 3 meetings/year
- *Viral Hepatitis* Newsletter
 - 2 issues/year
 - mailing to apr. 4500 readers
- Web site
- Scientific publications
- Participation at Scientific Meetings



VIRAL HEPATITIS

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Prevention and control of hepatitis A

Editorial

This issue of *Viral Hepatitis* reviews the topics covered at the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB) autumn meeting held on November 17-18, 2005 in Edinburgh, United Kingdom (UK). The aim of the meeting was to review the current UK practice relating to the control of viral hepatitis. Health policy, healthcare delivery, decision-making, research, and funding in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland were examined, in particular with regards to their implementation at national level. An update on the epidemiological situation of hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C in the UK was provided. Specific aspects of viral hepatitis were discussed, including virological and clinical aspects, control measures, public health perspectives, and economic evaluations. Preventive national and regional strategies for the control of viral hepatitis in the UK were then presented and assessed, including testing, vaccination, and treatment options. The meeting was concluded with lessons learnt from the UK experience and future challenges to be met.

Control of viral hepatitis in the UK - achievements and challenges

With regards to the decision-making process ensuring prevention of viral hepatitis, the need was recognised for a continuous evaluation of the current risk-group vaccination policy, to be compared with results obtained with alternative strategies, such as universal vaccination programmes, in other comparable countries of the European Union. The need to carefully monitor such alternative strategies implemented at the regional level in the UK was recognised. The need to target specific groups, such as immigrant populations, in preventive programmes and treatment was also identified.

In terms of chronic disease management, discussions focussed on the need for national strategy and action plan in the case of hepatitis B while the establishment of Managed Clinical Networks (MCNs) should be ensured in the case of hepatitis C.

The control of viral hepatitis in the United Kingdom was also seen to be lacking a reliable surveillance system, based on standard laboratory reporting and case notifications. The need for enhanced epidemiological data was mentioned in or-

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Web site www.vhpb.org

- Web site
 - Overview of the VHPB
 - Show all previous recommendations and consensus statements
 - All *Viral Hepatitis* issues as of 1996 can be downloaded
 - Presentations of VHPB meetings are one line since 2001 (264 presentations of in total 343 documents)



VHPB news



VHPB news

Overview of the VHPB

Meetings and publications

Meeting Conclusions

Links

Contact address

[New!! *Viral Hepatitis*, Volume 14, Number 2, prepared from material presented at the VHPB Meeting on the strategies and initiatives in the United Kingdom to control and prevent viral hepatitis is online.](#) 400Kb (.pdf)

This issue provides updated information on the epidemiological situation of viral hepatitis (A, B, C) in the UK and discusses various viral hepatitis control measures, prevention strategies and evaluation methods implemented or considered in the UK.

[Meeting "Prevention and control of perinatal hepatitis B virus transmission in the WHO European region" is online.](#)

Topics covered during this meeting:

- Epidemiology of perinatal HBV transmission globally and in the WHO European Region;
- Overview of the scientific evidence on prevention and control of perinatal HBV transmission through vaccination;
- Overview of countries with hepatitis B birth dose administration and maternal screening;
- Examples and experiences of countries regarding prevention and control of perinatal HBV transmission;
- Challenges and thresholds experienced while improving perinatal HBV transmission;
- Lessons learnt and opportunities.

The meeting programme, the pre-meeting document and all the presentations (English and Russian versions) of this meeting are available.

CDC - UNICEF - VHPB - WHO meeting
Mar/2006, Istanbul, Turkey

VHPB e-mail service

Receive a short message on VHPB web site updates

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Meetings and Recommendations

The VHPB has already covered a broad range of control and prevention strategies for all forms of hepatitis

- Surveillance
- Universal programs
- Injection safety and safe blood supply
- HBV mutants and variants
- Prevention and control of viral hepatitis in migrants and refugees
- Behavioural issues in hepatitis B vaccination
- How to reach risk groups
- Combined vaccines
- Economic evaluations
- Hepatitis B vaccination safety issues
- Hepatitis B vaccine and long term efficacy
- Hepatitis infections in health care workers
- Perinatal transmission
- Adolescent programmes

REVIEW

Hepatitis A and B vaccination and public health

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SUMMARY. The introduction and implementation of hepatitis B vaccination programmes in areas of high endemicity has been very stressful. However, this initial accomplishment has led to the reassessment of priorities in some countries which could undermine these early successes. Work still remains to be done to support and implement interventions that will bring us closer to the WHO goal and to the control of hepatitis B in the community at large. Hepatitis A vaccine strategy for immunizing toddlers is shifting to those countries with intermediate endemicity where increasing morbidity in adults is being observed. Accumulating evidence

indicates that such programmes can result in impressive reductions in the incidence of hepatitis A by herd immunity. Monitoring of these populations to determine durability of protection will be important to avoid shifting the infection to the older age population, when symptoms are more likely to occur. National policies need to consider hepatitis A vaccination in the context of other public health priorities.

Keywords: epidemiology, hepatitis A vaccine, hepatitis B vaccine, vaccine prevention.

INTRODUCTION

titis B immunization for infants and preschool children, even in low endemicity countries.

European orientation towards
the Better Management of

Hepatitis B

in Europe

**Recommendations of the
Hepatitis B expert group**

chaired by Dr. T. Ulmer,
Member of the European Parliament



Country meetings

- Italy 2002
- Germany and the Nordic Countries 2003
- France 2004
- UK 2005
- Spain 2006
- Greece 2007

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Objectives of the meeting

- Overview of surveillance systems for infectious diseases;
- Overview of the research activities on viral hepatitis in Greece;
- Evaluation of current prevention and control measures on viral hepatitis;
- Successes, problems and barriers to overcome, and the way forward.