Introduction to the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB)

Baltic Meeting – November 2015
More than 20 years of support to the control and prevention of viral hepatitis in Europe
VHPB

• Mission statement

The objective of VHPB is to contribute to the control and prevention of viral hepatitides:
  - by drawing the attention to this important public health problem
  - by issuing prevention and control guidance and catalyse the development of recommendations,
  - by encouraging actions to improve control and prevention.

Focus audiences are, in first instance, opinion leaders, policymakers, and health care professionals.
Major functions

• Organization of meetings with experts on viral hepatitis topics of current interest
• offering a discussion/expert platform
• Dissemination of discussion/conclusions of meetings, through website, newsletters, scientific papers, consensus statements....
• Alert and rapid response role
TECHNICAL MEETINGS:
REVIEW AND ISSUE GUIDELINES FOR CRITICAL ISSUES IN VIRAL HEPATITIS
Broad range of topics covered

– Universal Immunisation programs (transition from risk group strategy to universal immunization)
  • Immense progress (all but 5 countries in EURO Region)
– Surveillance best practice
  • Hepatitis B and C asymptomatic infection and chronic carriage
– Injection safety and safe blood supply
  • Realization that ~50% injections unsafe in developing world
– HBV mutants and variants
  • Prediction “Escape mutants” would negate gains of immunization.
– Prevention and control of hepatitis in migrants and refugees
  • Increasingly important issue
Broad range of topics covered

- Behavioural issues in hepatitis B vaccination
  - “Vaccine hesitancy” an increasing problem
- How to reach risk groups
  - Realization of difficulty in reaching most “high risk” groups
- Combined vaccines
- Economic evaluations (caution)
  - Transition from “anyone can do on back of envelope” to a professional activity
  - Pointing out biases that affect diseases with long incubation period
- Hepatitis B vaccination safety issues
  - Real vs perceived safety issues
- Hepatitis B vaccine and long term efficacy
  - Following long term studies
  - Determining need for booster doses
- Hepatitis infections and immunization strategies in HCW
- Prevention of perinatal transmission
  - Routine birth dose and/or maternal screening and post exposure prophylaxis
- Adolescent programmes
Broad range of topics covered

- Working with Patient and advocacy groups
- Hepatitis A and E
- Hepatitis A universal immunization
  - Understanding hepatitis E in West
- Identification and management of persons with HBV and HCV
  - Co-infections
  - Making sure immunization does not lose priority
COUNTRY MEETINGS
Objectives

- Understand strategies and programs to control viral hepatitis
- Monitor progress of countries in control of viral hepatitis
- Bring together people involved in viral hepatitis
- Draft guidelines to support countries based on lessons learned from other countries
Topics covered

- Surveillance systems
- Epidemiology
- Prevention and control measures
- Successes, issues and barriers to overcome
- Possible implementation of new strategies
- Health technology assessments
Countries covered

- Italy (2002)
- Germany and the Nordic Countries (2003)
- France (2004)
- UK (2005)
- Spain (2006)
- Greece (2007)
- The Netherlands (2008)
- Turkey (2009)
- Portugal (2010)
- Bulgaria (2011)
- Arctic Region (2012)
- Israel (2013)
- Brazil (2014)
• Fact sheets
• Viral Hepatitis
• Scientific publications

1995

VIRAL HEPATITIS PREVENTION BOARD
ACTION ON HEPATITIS B AS AN OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD

FACT SHEET

Structure
The Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB) is an independent, international and multidisciplinary group of experts established to consider various issues related to viral hepatitis in Europe, Australia and North America.

During 1992 the VHPB established an action on hepatitis B as an occupational hazard under the auspices of the Society of Occupational Medicine, and provided authoritative information and advice on hepatitis B infection as an occupational hazard. Hepatitis B is now considered to be the most infectious occupational hazard affecting healthcare professionals and many other workers in contact with blood and other body fluids.

In addition to its own occupational health advisers (listed below), the VHPB seeks advice from other experts and associations. The VHPB's activities are supported by an educational grant from SmithKline Beecham Biologicals.

The VHPB's objectives for the occupational health action in 1992 were to:

• increase awareness and understanding of the serious nature of hepatitis B infection among employers, trade unions and workers at occupational risk;
• provide information and advice to employers, employees and interested organisations on the risk of hepatitis B infection to workers;
• develop a set of pan-European recommendations to improve commitment to vaccination of at risk occupations;
• support and assist the European Parliament and Commission and appropriate national and regional authorities to adopt clearer guidelines;
• develop guidelines to ensure that healthcare and other workers exposed to blood or other potentially infected body fluids are offered hepatitis B vaccine free of charge.

Meetings
During 1992 the VHPB met on four occasions to consider the following key areas:
• March: Status of hepatitis B as an occupational hazard and its prevention
• June: Hepatitis B as an occupational hazard: Who is at risk?
• September: Effective use of hepatitis B vaccine in occupational risk groups
• November: Implementation of effective hepatitis B prevention programmes.

Actions
During 1992 the VHPB's action on hepatitis B as an occupational hazard was to:
• develop consensus recommendations;
• issue press materials to key media, occupational and risk group media;
• publish a journal, Viral Hepatitis, to provide news and updates on hepatitis B;
• present all published material in a number of languages to ensure broad readership;
• participate at relevant conferences.

In addition, the VHPB is organising a congress on hepatitis B as an occupational hazard to be held in March 1993.
Web site www.vhpbo.org
Web site www.vhpdb.org
Way of working
Advisors meetings 2-3 year

Agenda setting:
- Selection of technical meeting topics
- Selection of country meetings
- Composition of the board/members

Permanent scientific secretariat at CEV, University of Antwerp
Independent from
- International organisations like WHO/ECDC/EU
- Ministries of Health
- Professional and scientific societies
- Industry
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<th>VHPB Advisors</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WHO</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nedret Emiroğlu</td>
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<td>Stefan Wiktor</td>
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<td><strong>ECDC</strong></td>
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<td>Andrew Amato, Erika Duffell</td>
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<td><strong>CDC</strong></td>
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<td>John Ward</td>
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<td><strong>EASL (European Association for the study of the Liver)</strong></td>
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<td>Fiona Godfrey</td>
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<td><strong>ELPA (European Liver Patient Association)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tatjana Reic</td>
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<td><strong>Public Health Institute</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hans Blystad</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Goldberg</td>
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<td>Mira Kojouharova</td>
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<td>Johannes Hallauer</td>
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These honorary members are elected for a lifelong term and are invited to VHPB meetings on an ad hoc basis.
VHPB Structure

Executive secretariat based at the VAXINFECTIO unit of the University of Antwerp:

- Emmy Engelen
- Greet Hendrickx
- Ina Lodewijckx
- Alex Vorsters

*Executive secretary*

- Pierre Van Damme
Support and Grants

Supported by

- **unrestricted** grants from industry (GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals, Sanofi Pasteur, Crucell, Merck, and recently Gilead, Abbvie, IFPMA)
- several universities and other institutions in Europe
- VHPB received in the past for their activities in CEE and NIS funds from GAVI fund, CVP at PATH, UNICEF, CDC, WHO

![Financial and in kind support from different actors (2012)](chart.png)
Summary of two decades VHPB activities

- Since 1992, **22** years of experience
- **38** issues of Viral Hepatitis
- Meetings: **43** VHPB meetings, **3** EE/NIS meetings, **1** global HAV meeting
- Board members: 35 representing 17 different countries and many disciplines
- Peer reviewed publications: more than 85
- Since 1994, The VHPB Executive Secretariat is part of the Centre for the Evaluation of Vaccination, University of Antwerp
Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board Meeting

Riga, Latvia, 19-20 November 2015

Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis in the Baltic States: Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward
Objectives of the meeting

– Provide an overview of surveillance systems for infectious diseases;
– Review the epidemiological situation on viral hepatitis;
– Give an overview of the current prevention and control measures on viral hepatitis;
– Discuss the progress achieved in hepatitis prevention;
– Review the possible implementation of new prevention strategies, control measures and monitoring systems;
– Discuss the development or the enrolment of a National hepatitis plan;
– Discuss the successes, issues and barriers to overcome, and the way forward.
At the end of the meeting, the conclusions will be presented and discussed.

All presentations will be available on the website.

A report of the meeting will be submitted in a peer-reviewed journal.

And we hope to initiate or accelerate the discussion on Viral hepatitis prevention and control in the country.