



Introduction to the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB)

Baltic Meeting – November 2015



VHPB

More than 20 years of support to the
control and prevention of viral hepatitis
in Europe



- Mission statement

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 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



Broad range of topics covered

- 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)





Output

- Fact sheets
- Viral Hepatitis
- Scientific publications

Vaccine 28 (2010) 583–588

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

 **Vaccine** 

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/vaccine

Conference report

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Hepatitis A
Hepatitis E
Prevention
Epidemiology
Vaccines

ABSTRACT

In March 2009 the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB) organized a meeting in Antwerp, in order to review the status of epidemiology and prevention of both hepatitis A and E. International hepatitis experts from the public health and academic sector provided the state of the art on HAV and emphasized the growing public health importance of the disease, in particular in intermediate endemicity regions, and the need for control at global level. The information shared on HEV showed clearly that it is emerging, but still a lot of efforts are needed to clarify among others the transmission routes, the clinical presentations and the burden of disease. First data on hepatitis E vaccines were discussed, showing a promising safety and efficacy profile. The meeting was concluded with lessons learnt, challenges, needs and proposed step forwards for both diseases.

Hepatitis A and E: Update on prevention and epidemiology of symptomatic disease is shifting towards adolescents. People at-risk include travellers to endemic countries, men who have sex



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 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 medical, 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.vhpb.org

VHPB News | About us | Meetings | Publications | Resources | Links | Contact us

Recent meetings

- ▶ 2014 March | Brasilia, Brazil
- ▶ 2013 November | Split, Croatia
- ▶ 2013 March | Jerusalem, Israel

Recent publications

- ▶ Burden and prevention of viral hepatitis in the Arctic region, Copenhagen, Denmark, 22-23 March 2012 Meeting report

Recent newsletters

- ▶ Burden and prevention of viral hepatitis in Arctic region
- ▶ Hepatitis B vaccination: a completed schedule...enough to control HBV lifelong?
- ▶ Burden and prevention of viral hepatitis in Bulgaria

World Health Assembly adopted resolution on hepatitis

On May 22 2014, the World Health Assembly adopted a [resolution](#) to improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis.

[Read more](#)

Partners sign call to action on hepatitis

Participants of the first global partners' meeting on hepatitis convened by WHO in March 2014 agree on a historic "call to action to scale up global hepatitis response". The "call to action" presses the global community for immediate and concerted action to increase access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis.

[Read more](#)

CALL TO ACTION TO SCALE UP GLOBAL HEPATITIS RESPONSE

GLOBAL PARTNERS' MEETING ON HEPATITIS
(Convened by WHO in March 2014 in Brasilia)

Background

Hepatitis B and C are major causes of liver disease and liver cancer. In 2014, WHO estimates that 250 million people are living with hepatitis B and 130 million with hepatitis C. These viruses are transmitted through blood and body fluids, and can cause long-term liver damage, liver failure and liver cancer. Hepatitis B and C are preventable and treatable, but access to prevention and treatment is limited in many countries. The global community must act now to increase access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis.

The global partners' meeting on hepatitis, which took place in Brasilia, Brazil, in March 2014, was a historic event. It brought together experts from WHO and other international organizations to discuss the global burden of hepatitis B and C and to develop a call to action to scale up the global response to these viruses. The call to action is a historic document that sets out a clear and ambitious plan of action to increase access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis. It calls for immediate and concerted action to increase access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis. The call to action is a historic document that sets out a clear and ambitious plan of action to increase access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis. It calls for immediate and concerted action to increase access to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of viral hepatitis.

EASL Recommendations on Treatment of Hepatitis C 2014

In April 2014, EASL released updated [recommendations on treatment of hepatitis C](#). These recommendations are intended to assist physicians and other healthcare providers, as well as patients and other interested individuals, in the clinical decision-making process by describing the optimal management of patients with acute and chronic hepatitis C infections.

[Read more](#)

APRIL 2014

EASL Recommendations on Treatment of Hepatitis C 2014

2014

EASL

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privacy statement
review cycle
Realisatie: ▶ SparkLynx



Web site www.vhpb.org

The screenshot shows the VHPB website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for VHPB News, About us, Meetings, Publications, Resources, Links, and Contact us, along with a search bar. The main content area features a 'Recent meetings' section with a list of events: 2014 March in Brasilia, Brazil; 2013 November in Split, Croatia; and 2013 March in Jerusalem, Israel. A featured article titled 'World Health Assembly adopted resolution on hepatitis' is displayed, with a 'Read more' link. A large red button with the text 'SUBSCRIBE NOW' and a play icon is overlaid on the page, with a blue arrow pointing downwards from it. The footer contains contact information for VHPB, including the address at the University of Antwerp, and lists the Executive Secretary (Pierre Van Damme) and Administrative and Scientific Secretariat (Emmy Engelen, Tinne Lermout, Alex Vorsters, Greet Hendriks). It also provides links for the VHPB e-mail service, ordering publications, and a privacy statement review cycle. The website is realized by SparkLynx.



Way of working



VHPB

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



VHPB Advisors

WHO		Academic/University	
Nedret Emiroğlu	WHO Regional Office for Europe	Mojca Maticic	Slovenia
Stefan Wiktor	WHO Headquarters	Paolo Bonanni	Florence, Italy
ECDC		Angela Dominguez	Barcelona, Spain
Andrew Amato, Erika Duffell	ECDC, Sweden	Wolfgang Jilg	Regensburg, Germany
CDC		Helène Norder	Stockholm, Sweden
John Ward	CDC, USA	Françoise Roudot-Thoraval	Paris, France
EASL (European Association for the study of the Liver)		Rui Tato Marinho	Lisbon, Portugal
Fiona Godfrey	EASL	Daniel Shouval	Jerusalem, Israel
ELPA (European Liver Patient Association)		Koen Van Herck	Antwerp, Belgium
Tatjana Reic	European Liver Patient Association (ELPA)	Alessandro Zanetti	Milan, Italy
Public Health Institute		Vana Papaevangelou	Goudi, Greece
Hans Blystad	Norway		
David Goldberg	Scotland		
Mira Kojouharova	Sofia, Bulgaria		
Johannes Hallauer	Germany		

Honorary Members

Pietro Crovari	Italy	Eric Mast	USA
Alain Goudeau	France	Elisabeth McCloy	UK
Nicole Guérin	France	André Meheus	Belgium
Peter Grob	Switzerland	Lars Rombo	Sweden
Mark Kane	USA	Colette Roure	France
Harold Margolis	Korea	Daniel Lavanchy	Switzerland
Steven Wiersma	USA		

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

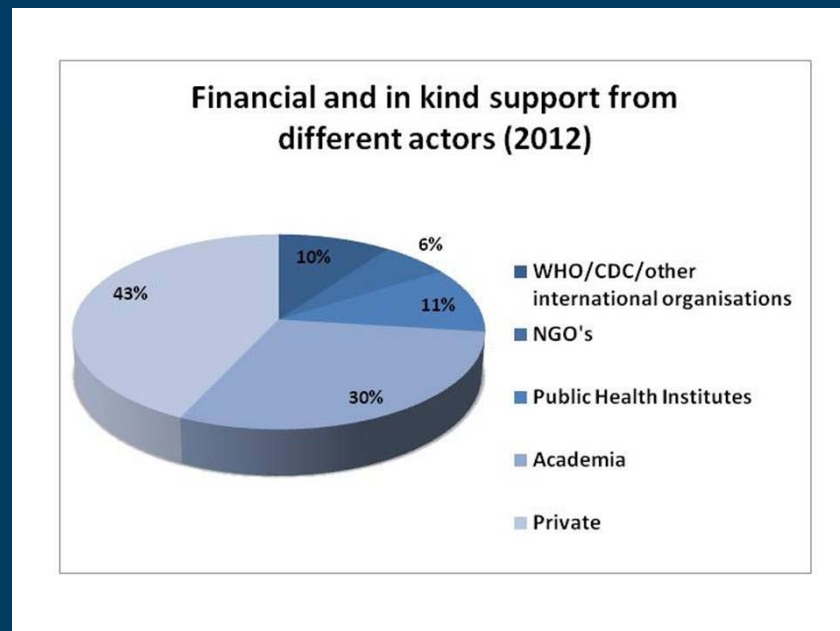
- Pierre Van Damme



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

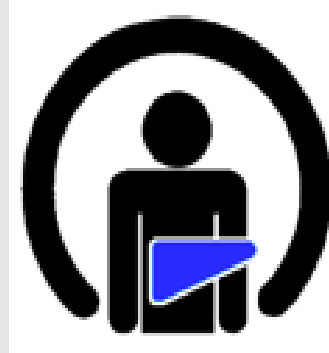


Summary of two decades VHPB activities

- 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.



outcome of the meeting

- 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

