

To the Director-General of WHO
Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

To the Director of the Department of Global HIV,
Hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections Programmes
Dr. Meg Doherty

To WHO Regional Director for Europe
Dr. Hans Kluge

27 July 2024

Dear esteemed colleagues,

We, the representatives of patient communities and non-profit organizations, would like to draw your attention to the issue of diagnosing and treating hepatitis D virus (HDV) worldwide, particularly in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region.

In its 2024 report, WHO recognizes that HDV and HBV coinfection is considered the most severe form of chronic viral hepatitis due to more rapid progression towards hepatocellular carcinoma and liver-related death. According to the report, HDV affects nearly 5% of people globally who have a chronic HBV infection, and HDV coinfection could explain about 20% of cases of liver disease and liver cancer among people with HBV infection.¹

At the same time, recently, especially in the context of humanitarian crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and military conflicts, there has been a significant increase in the number of appeals to patient organizations and NGOs regarding HDV. Patients report that they cannot receive adequate counseling and medical care related to hepatitis D, especially in terms of diagnosis and treatment. Typically, people seek help at advanced stages of liver damage, which significantly complicates treatment and worsens the prognosis.

Simultaneously, we must state the almost complete lack of epidemiological data on hepatitis D in the EECA region and worldwide and the low level of awareness about this issue among health professionals and administrators. In informal discussions about the importance of separate work on hepatitis D, the key role of WHO as the leading organization responsible for developing methodological recommendations based on available epidemiological and clinical data has been repeatedly emphasized.

On this World Hepatitis Day, in connection with the above, **we urgently call on WHO to establish a working group on hepatitis D as soon as possible and develop a dedicated document containing recommendations for diagnosing and treating this disease as well as as well as outlining the path forward for the research agenda.**

We are confident that such measures will help improve the situation with the detection and treatment of hepatitis D, raise awareness among professionals, and improve the prognosis for patients.

¹ Global hepatitis report 2024: action for access in low- and middle-income countries

Sincerely,

The undersigned organizations:

1. Eurasian Community for Access to Treatment (ECAT), Georgia
2. Treatment Action Group, USA
3. ITPC Global, South Africa
4. International Treatment Preparedness Coalition in EECA, Georgia
5. Global Network of PLWH (GNP+), Netherlands
6. Central Asia Association People Living with HIV, Kazakhstan
7. Eurasian union of adolescent and youth Teenergizer, Georgia
8. TB people Network, Georgia
9. Delhi Network of Positive People (DNP+), India
10. Thai Network of PLWH (TNP+), Thailand
11. Eastern Europe and Central Asian Community Advisory Board, Georgia
12. Public organization "Stop Hepatitis kg", Kyrgyzstan
13. Public organization "Fight Hepatitis", Kyrgyzstan
14. Public Fund "AGEP'C", Kazakhstan
15. NGO "BCD", Ukraine
16. Association "Answer", Kazakhstan
17. Association of healthcare programs "Partnership Network", Kyrgyzstan
18. People PLUS, Belarus
19. Life2.0, Georgia
20. Social Equation Hub, Georgia
21. Initiativa Positiva, Moldova
22. Positive People Network, Armenia
23. RNGO "Faith and life", Uzbekistan