

Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination Names Professor Mohammad Ali as 2021 Elimination Champion

– Professor Ali founded the National Liver Foundation of Bangladesh (NLFB), a philanthropic organization dedicated to the prevention, treatment, education and research on liver diseases in Bangladesh.

Atlanta, GA., July 23, 2021 – In honor of World Hepatitis Day, the Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination is pleased to announce Professor Mohammad Ali was selected as a 2021 Elimination Champion for his contributions to advancing hepatitis elimination in Bangladesh.

Professor Ali is a trained surgeon and hepatitis advocate. He performed the first ever successful liver transplant in Bangladesh at BIRDEM Hospital in June 2010 and the second Liver Transplant in August 2011. Alongside his clinical work, Professor Ali founded the National Liver Foundation of Bangladesh (NLFB) in 1999. The NLFB is a philanthropic organization that is dedicated to prevention, treatment, and research on liver diseases in Bangladesh.

"Our country has a lot of problems, including the burden of hepatitis B and C. There was no other organization working for control of hepatitis in Bangladesh, a country of over 150 million people. 65 % of the population is in the rural areas, so I went to the rural areas and asked a lot of people what they know about hepatitis. But they did not know anything. They were silently suffering and dying. This gloomy experience inspired me to create a program to reach the common people at the grassroots level," says Dr. Ali on the founding of the NLFB.

NLFB has been an active member of the World Hepatitis Alliance (WHA) since its inception. Professor Ali brought WHA's NOHep and Find the Missing Millions Campaigns to underserved communities in Bangladesh to amplify efforts to find, test and treat persons living with viral hepatitis. These campaigns provide testing and treatment at no cost to the patient, saving lives and averting chronic disability. In 2017, Professor Ali's NOHep Drive toured all 8 divisions of Bangladesh, distributing more than 30,000 information sheets and providing free hepatitis B screening to 120 children in Sylhet. In another NOHep campaign, Dr. Ali focused on testing the Rohingya refugee population, resulting in a study showing a shockingly high prevalence of hepatitis C among this population. Over the years, Professor Ali has also initiated hepatitis B & C patient conferences to increase awareness among patients & their families, introduced NOHep cricket to engage the youth, conducted free testing and vaccination of thousands of orphan children, and through the Zakat fund offered free treatment of under-privileged young hepatitis B & C patients.

On all these efforts Dr. Ali reflects, *"Our organization is working every day to achieve the 2030 goals and is dedicated to reaching the unreachable and underprivileged communities. When people living with hepatitis B or C come to us, we provide them with whatever they need- whether access to care or money to purchase medicines." And we will continue to do this as a non-profit organization working for prevention and education and research on liver disease in Bangladesh."*

Professor Ali is an active advocate for hepatitis elimination. He is one of the signatories of the Resolution on Viral Hepatitis that was accepted by the Sixty-third World Health Assembly in May 2010 and recognized a global World Hepatitis Day on July 28th. He also worked as a country representative with the WHO SEARO office to create a regional strategy for the prevention and control of viral hepatitis in South-East Asia.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Ali intensified his efforts to test and treat hepatitis patients. He utilized telehealth to continue consultations with hepatitis patients, provided guidance on continuing hepatitis treatment, and used a courier service to deliver treatment to patients.

In all, six Elimination Champions were selected across the world. The other champions selected were:

- Mr. Arafat Bwambale, Uganda
- Dr. John Dillon, Scotland
- Rachel Gonzalez and Dr. Angela Park, United States
- Dr. Gamal Shiha, Egypt
- Dr. Alethse de la Torre Rosas, México

The Elimination Champion initiative was launched in 2019 and aims to recognize the remarkable contributions of individuals to improved political commitment, policies, and programs that expand access to interventions and accelerate progress toward hepatitis elimination, particularly in areas with limited resources.

“The Coalition salutes the Hepatitis Elimination Champions from six countries bound by a shared commitment to eliminating hepatitis as a health threat for their patients and communities. These Champions are committed to achieving health equity, the ultimate goal of hepatitis elimination, by fighting hepatitis-related stigma, advocating for government action and expanding access to hepatitis testing and treatment through capacity building and developing simplified models of care. Because of their actions and the example they set for others, the world is that much closer to the goals for eliminating hepatitis. Congratulations and thank you,” says Dr. John Ward, Director of the Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination.

The Elimination Champion 2021 nominations were opened from March 29th to May 24th, 2021. In all, 17 nominations were received from 15 countries, across all WHO regions. A panel of judges representing previous Elimination Champions, elimination program managers, the major liver disease professional associations, civil society, and donors assessed the nominations. Champions will receive awards by mail, and their profiles will be added to <https://www.globalhep.org/champions>.

World Hepatitis Day

World Hepatitis Day is commemorated each year on 28 July to enhance awareness of viral hepatitis, an inflammation of the liver that causes a range of health problems, including liver cancer. There are five main strains of the hepatitis virus – A, B, C, D and E. Together, hepatitis B (HBV) and C (HCV) are the most common, with 354 million people living with HBV or HCV globally and more than 1.3 million lives lost each year. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, viral hepatitis continues to claim thousands of lives every day. See more at <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-hepatitis-day/2021>

Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination

With the availability of reliable tests, highly protective hepatitis B vaccines, effective HBV medications, and curative HCV therapies in hand, in 2016, the WHO set targets for HBV and HCV elimination by 2030. The Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination (CGHE) was launched in July 2019 to accelerate progress toward these goals. Modeled after other disease elimination initiatives managed by the Task Force for Global Health, CGHE aims to strengthen the capacity of national and subnational hepatitis elimination programs through advocacy, technical assistance, knowledge generation, and dissemination among partners united in a community of practice. Find out more at www.globalhep.org.

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