Closing the Gaps in the Hepatitis C Care Cascade

Program and Speaker Bios
Closing the Gaps in the Hepatitis C Care Cascade Program

Welcome, John W. Ward, Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination

1. Introduction to the challenges and solutions, Philippa Easterbrook, WHO (10 min)

2. Strengthening linkages from antibody to confirmatory testing

- Significant Improvement in Diagnosis of Hepatitis C Virus Infection by a One-Step Strategy in a Central Laboratory, Francisco Rodríguez, Frías University Hospital Vall d'Hebron, Spain (15 min)
  
  Q&A (5 min)

- Multicentre Evaluation of Dried Blood Spot (DBS) and Plasma Separation Card (PSC) samples for the quantitative detection of HCV RNA, Elena Ivanova, FIND (15 min)
  
  Q&A (5 min)

3. Strengthening linkages from diagnosis to treatment & Re-engaging patients in care once they are lost to follow-up

- iThemba Life: Empowering HCV patients to engage in care and treatment, Samanta Lalla-Edward, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (15 min)
  
  Q&A (5 min)

- Re-engaging Patients in HCV care: Real-World Experience from the US Department of Veterans Affairs, Angela Park and Rachel Gonzalez, US Department of Veteran Affairs, United States (15 min)
  
  Q&A (5 min)

- A Digital Case-Finding Algorithm for Diagnosed but Untreated Hep C: A Tool for Increasing Linkage to Treatment and Cure, Brooke Wyatt, Icahn School of Medicine Mount Sinai, United States (10 min)
  
  Q&A (5 min)

Discussion & Q/A (15 min)
Speaker Bios

Philippa Easterbrook, MBBCHIR, MPH, DTM&H
Senior Scientist, Global Hepatitis Program, Global HIV, Hepatitis and STIs Programs, World Health Organization, Geneva Switzerland

Philippa Easterbrook is Senior Scientist in the Global Hepatitis Program at the World Health Organization Headquarters in Geneva. She is an HIV and infectious diseases physician and epidemiologist who has worked in the UK, United States and Sub-Saharan Africa. At WHO, she has led the development and dissemination of global normative guidance for HIV as well as Hepatitis B and C testing and treatment. She also provides technical guidance to national programs worldwide on the implementation of hepatitis B and C testing and treatment scale-up programs as part of a global elimination strategy. For eleven years, she was Head of Department, Professor of HIV Medicine, and consultant physician in Infectious Diseases at King’s College London, and also Head of Research at the Infectious Diseases Institute in Uganda. Philippa has served as a Member of the UK Medical Research Council Infection and Immunity Committee, and was vice-chair of the World Health Organization Guidelines Review Committee. Her HIV research has encompassed epidemiology, clinical trials, operational and qualitative research, and laboratory-based studies.
Francisco Rodríguez-Frias, PhD
Head of Liver Pathology Unit for Vall d’Hebron Hospital, Head of Clinical Biochemistry Research Group of the Vall d’Hebron Research Institute, and Associate Professor of Biochemistry, Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), Barcelona, Spain

Francisco Rodriguez-Frias has a degree in Chemical Sciences from the University of Barcelona-UB (1976-1981) and a PhD from the Autonomous University of Barcelona-UAB (1994) as well as two Masters from this university. In 1989 was in Max Von Pettenkofer Institut (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) with Professor Michael Roggendorf, where he was trained in PCR for viral hepatitis. Biochemist and senior researcher of the Clinical Biochemistry Service of the Vall d’Hebron University Hospital where he was trained as a specialist in Clinical Biochemistry (1987-1991) and since 1991 he develops his healthcare activity, currently as Clinical Head of the Special Areas (10 units and 15 physicians under his charge). He is directly responsible for the Liver Pathology Unit of the Biochemistry and Microbiology services of Vall d’Hebron Hospital, which is a maximal level hospital with 1,200 beds, the main one on Catalonia state. Vall d’Hebron Hospital Clinical Laboratories are the biggest and most complex in Spain. This laboratory serves all Barcelona city population (1.5 million inhabitants). At the research level, Francisco Rodriguez-Frias is responsible for the Clinical Biochemistry Research Group (50 members) of the Vall d’Hebron Research Institute (the biggest in Spain), senior researcher at CIBER on liver and digestive diseases (a research network dependent on the Spanish administration). At the teaching level, he is an Associate Professor of Biochemistry at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), teaching undergraduate subjects in the Sciences and Medicine schools, and also teaching in the Master’s programs of UAB and UB. He has been a supervisor for 6 doctoral theses and currently for 9 in progress. He is the Principal Investigator in 5 competitive projects of the Carlos III Institute (Spanish administration) and others of different entities. He is the Author of 205 articles in scientific journals as well as author of book chapters, currently with an H index = 46 and a total impact factor of 1,286.
Elena Ivanova Reipold, MD, PhD
Technology Innovation Lead, Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), Geneva, Switzerland

Dr. Elena Ivanova Reipold joined FIND in 2016 and is currently Technology Innovation Lead following her three-year role as Deputy Head HCV R&D. She earned her MD in clinical biochemistry from Siberian State Medical University, Tomsk, Russia. While earning her PhD in molecular biology from Engelhardt Institute of Molecular Biology, Moscow, she worked on structural and functional relationships of proteins. In 2009, Elena was postdoctoral fellow at the University of Geneva, where she studied protein-protein and protein-RNA interactions, mechanisms of viral protein synthesis and cellular response to viral infections in human cells.

After receiving her PhD and before doing her postdoctoral work, Elena worked for a short while for the biotech company ChemRAR Ltd., where she was involved in high-throughput screening assays for drug discovery.

Before joining FIND in 2016, she followed the Swiss Federal training programme for the founders of knowledge- and technology-based companies, where she developed a project on HCV point-of-care diagnosis.
Samanta Lalla-Edward, PhD
Head, Research Development,
Ezintsha, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Samanta Lalla-Edward is a public health monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialist with over 15 years of experience in HIV prevention and treatment research and implementation. She has led the M&E of large Pepfar programmes in South Africa, including providing technical and training support to all levels of the Department of Health. More recently she has been involved in large donor funded research projects in the areas of HIV prevention technologies, non-communicable diseases and HIV, digital health, medical technologies, and high risk populations. Samanta is passionate about building research capacity particularly for postgraduate students. She collaborates with other investigators in Africa and globally to plan and operationalize clinical and healthcare research, as well as develop local staff in research and scientific writing capability. She is committed to ensuring that young researchers receive the best possible training and support, both, to continue to advance healthcare service delivery and in our fight against HIV and non-communicable diseases.
Rachel Gonzalez, MPH  
Former Assistant Director for the National Hepatic Consortium for Redesigning Care (NHCRC), US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), United States

Rachel Gonzalez, MPH is a public health practitioner and former Assistant Director for the National Hepatic Consortium for Redesigning Care (NHCRC) within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a national healthcare system providing care to 9 million Veterans. Rachel is committed to serving patients and their families by improving how healthcare is delivered. Her work is informed by her expertise in Lean and her professional roles in research, non-profit organizations, and academic settings. Rachel’s advocacy is also motivated by her personal experience witnessing her family’s and community’s challenges in accessing quality healthcare.

From 2013 to 2019, Rachel implemented VA’s Hepatitis C Innovation Team (HIT) National Collaborative to increase Veterans’ access to Hepatitis C testing and treatment. In partnership with Angela Park, Rachel combined population health management and process improvement practices to rally VA’s hepatitis care community to rapidly respond to the availability of direct-acting antiviral agents.

The success of the HIT national program was built on a 20-year foundation of VA leadership and clinicians’ work in hepatitis care. Rachel had the distinct privilege to work across VA’s network of 171 medical centers to assess opportunities, identify gaps in care, and facilitate a deliberate, methodical approach to close those gaps. Today, VA has screened >85% of Veterans in care born from 1945 to 1965 and ~76% of all Veterans in care. Approximately 90% of those with known HCV have been treated. The successes achieved are due to the incredible network of professionals at VA whose commitment and advocacy on behalf of Veterans are unparalleled.

VA’s work demonstrates that elimination is possible. No matter where or who you are, we want people affected by hepatitis to access care in the way that best responds to their needs.

Rachel now works to apply the lessons learned from the HIT Collaborative to national VA pharmacy-based initiatives in substance use disorders and to regional process improvement efforts in anticoagulation.
Angela Park, PharmD

Program Specialist, Office of Healthcare Transformation, US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), United States

Angela Park, PharmD is a Clinical Pharmacy Practitioner and serves as a Program Specialist for the Office of Healthcare Transformation within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Dr. Park is a skilled program manager, transformational leader, coach, and mentor. She is also a Lean, Six Sigma and change practitioner, and advanced facilitator.

From 2014 through 2019, Dr. Park co-led the Hepatitis C Innovation Team (HIT) National Collaborative. The HIT focused on empowering regional teams to utilize Lean process improvement to improve hepatitis C virus (HCV) care from diagnosis through cure.

Dr. Park worked with Rachel Gonzalez as part of a leadership group, coaching teams to set aspirational goals for each step of the hepatitis care cascade and planning and facilitating a virtual collaborative that was supplemented by annual in-person meetings. The HIT National Collaborative guided teams to implement practices that ultimately enabled clinicians to identify, treat, and cure over 100,000 Veterans of HCV. This work demonstrated the resilience of VA personnel and Veterans to overcome system-wide and context-specific barriers in service to a greater mission.

Dr. Park has also led projects within VA on improving anticoagulation care, expanding precision oncology service—including establishing a National TeleOncology program—and establishing enterprise-wide capability for COVID genomic sequencing.
Brooke E. Wyatt, MPH
Senior Quality Assurance and Data Analyst, Division of Liver Diseases, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Brooke E. Wyatt is a trained researcher, study design, implementation and evaluation consultant with a comprehensive background in issues around health care and health disparities among minority/marginalized populations in the United States. She is trained in primary and secondary research & analysis, qualitative/quantitative research design, intervention design and implementation, and database management and mining and works within the Liver Disease division at Mount Sinai Hospital. Her areas of study have most recently focused on Hepatitis C (mono and co-infected), Hepatocellular Carcinoma (specifically Post-SVR), Diabetes and liver disease, general liver care as well as studying the health behaviors of those disproportionately affected by any of the aforementioned diseases. She has worked in the field for over ten years with close to ten years of both patient care and academic research, the extent of her work focusing on investigating clinical risk factors as they relate to less favorable outcomes in patient care, understanding the relationship between specific diseases or disease states and clinical or behavioral outcomes. She brings value at each stage of research or program development, from inception through implementation and evaluation. More recently this has taken a focus on understanding and synthesizing big-data to inform more direct patient focused approaches to individualized care. Her contributions have been cited on 20 different abstract presentations and manuscripts. She received her B.A. in Biological Anthropology from Columbia University, Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from George Washington University, and is completing her Doctorate in Public Health from SUNY Downstate University.
Moderator

John W. Ward, MD
Director, Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination, Task Force for Global Health

Dr. John W. Ward created and directs the Coalition for Global Hepatitis Elimination of the Task Force for Global Health. Modelled after other Task Force programs to eliminate disease, the Coalition is a community of practice strengthening the capacity of national and sub-national hepatitis elimination programs through funding, advocacy, technical assistance, operational research and monitoring progress toward hepatitis elimination in >190 countries. Globally, Dr. Ward is an advisor to African Union Hepatitis Technical Working Group, and WHO including the PAHO technical advisory committee on disease elimination and the WPRO Hepatitis B Expert Resource Panel. Dr. Ward chairs the AASLD Task Force for Hepatitis Elimination. Over a 13-year tenure, Dr. Ward directed the US CDC Division of Viral Hepatitis with responsibilities for viral hepatitis surveillance, prevention, and research. At the national level, Dr. Ward developed recommendations for hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccination, hepatitis B and hepatitis C screening, authored the first action plan for viral hepatitis prevention. Dr. Ward initiated the US Academies of Sciences recommendations for viral hepatitis elimination and guided the launch of pioneer HCV elimination programs. Earlier Dr. Ward was Editor of the CDC MMWR and assisted in the CDC response to large outbreaks including SARS and the anthrax attacks after 9/11. As a medical epidemiologist in the CDC HIV/AIDS program, Dr. Ward identified new routes of HIV transmission, evaluated the first HIV tests to protect the nation’s blood supply and led national HIV/AIDS surveillance. Dr. Ward has authored over 150 publications of scientific work in viral hepatitis and HIV and edited Silent Victories, a history of public health in the 20th Century published by Oxford University Press. Dr. Ward received his medical training at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and University of Washington, Seattle. Dr. Ward is a Professor in the Hubert Department of Global Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, Atlanta.