

World Hepatitis Day — July 28, 2016

World Hepatitis Day, recognized on July 28, was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) to raise awareness and promote understanding of viral hepatitis, the seventh leading cause of death worldwide (1). Together, hepatitis B and hepatitis C are responsible for most of the 1.4 million annual deaths attributed to viral hepatitis (1). In April 2016, the 69th World Health Assembly adopted a Global Viral Hepatitis Strategy that aims to eliminate hepatitis B and hepatitis C as public health threats by 2030 (1). The strategy includes prevention and treatment targets that, when met, will save millions of lives.

This issue of MMWR features a report revealing the growing risk for perinatal transmission of hepatitis C virus (HCV) in the United States, a risk most pronounced in areas where HCV incidence is increasing among young adults and women of childbearing age. Vaccination-based strategies are highly effective in preventing perinatal hepatitis B virus transmission (2). The report highlights that, in the absence of a vaccine for HCV, there is an immediate need to improve risk screening, scale up HCV testing among persons at risk, including children born to HCV-infected mothers, as recommended by CDC and the United States Preventive Services Task Force, and improve case reporting, particularly among women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy. Additional information and resources are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis>.

References

1. World Health Organization. Draft global health sector strategies: viral hepatitis, 2016–2021. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 2016. http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_32-en.pdf?ua=1
2. Mast EE, Margolis HS, Fiore AE, et al. A comprehensive immunization strategy to eliminate transmission of hepatitis B virus infection in the United States: recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) part 1: immunization of infants, children, and adolescents. MMWR Recomm Rep 2005;54(No. RR-16).

Increased Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Detection in Women of Childbearing Age and Potential Risk for Vertical Transmission — United States and Kentucky, 2011–2014

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Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is a leading cause of liver-related morbidity and mortality (1). Transmission of HCV is primarily via parenteral blood exposure, and HCV can be transmitted vertically from mother to child. Vertical transmission occurs in 5.8% (95% confidence interval = 4.2%–7.8%) of infants born to women who are infected only with HCV and in up to twice as many infants born to women who are also infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (2) or who have high HCV viral loads (3,4); there is currently no recommended intervention to prevent transmission of infection from mother to child (3). Increased reported incidence of HCV infection among persons aged ≤ 30 years (5,6) with similar

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