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PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF VIRAL HEPATITIS IN THE AMERICAS – 2016–2019

The viral hepatitis occupies a prominent place among communicable diseases because of the large number of infected individuals who face the complications and negative outcomes of the disease. In addition to the heavy financial and social burden associated with VH morbidity and significant rates of mortality across the globe, including in the Region of the Americas.

Viral hepatitis is listed among the priorities in the PAHO Strategic Plan under category 1 (communicable diseases), and broader public health response is needed to address the challenges of VH prevention, treatment, and control. Therefore, a comprehensive Plan of Action addressing cross-cutting themes in a comprehensive manner, will orient efforts in the health sector response to VH in terms of attaining and maintaining PAHO's goals during 2014–2019 and beyond.

GOAL

The general objective of the plan is to strengthen national and regional public health responses with respect to

the prevention, treatment, and control of viral hepatitis and reductions in VH-related morbidity, disability, and mortality in Member States.

STRATEGIC LINES OF ACTION

This Plan of Action is based on the following strategic lines of action:

1. Promoting an integrated comprehensive response.
2. Fostering equitable access to preventive care.
3. Fostering equitable access to clinical care.
4. Strengthening strategic information.
5. Strengthening laboratory capacity to support diagnosis, surveillance, and a safe blood supply.

PAHO Member States, in collaboration with the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, will support the following objectives:

- 1.1** Promote integration of viral hepatitis prevention, surveillance, diagnosis, care, and control interventions and services within the health sector and implement them in a concerted and effective manner with relevant partners and stakeholders.
- 1.2** Promote the development and implementation of coordinated public health policies and interventions with the aim of eliminating hepatitis B and hepatitis C in PAHO Member States by 2030.
- 1.3** Implement information and communication activities and campaigns at the regional, sub regional, national, and local levels to raise awareness of the existence, severity, and routes of transmission of viral hepatitis and measures to prevent and control the disease.
- 2.1** Maintain and expand HBV immunization programs in order to increase coverage for all children and for members of key populations and vulnerable groups.
- 2.2** Encourage countries to conduct epidemiological, burden of disease, and health technology assessment, such as cost-effectiveness analyses to support evidence-based decisions regarding the introduction of hepatitis A vaccine.
- 2.3** Strengthen the capacity of the health sector to conduct the necessary actions to promote the strictest application of norms, protocols, and recommendations to prevent viral hepatitis infections in health care settings.
- 2.4** Strengthen the capacity of the health sector to develop and implement policies and strategies to prevent viral hepatitis infections among people who use drugs and other key populations.
- 3.1** Adapt and implement norms and standards for screening diagnosis for screening, diagnosis, care, and treatment of viral hepatitis.
- 3.2** Adapt and implement norms and standards for treatment of viral hepatitis (B and C) in HIV co-infected patients.
- 4.1** Increase and strengthen countries' capacity to develop and implement strategies for the surveillance, prevention, control, and/or elimination of viral hepatitis.
- 4.2** Increase countries' capacity to analyze, publish, and disseminate national data on viral hepatitis and impact of responses disaggregated by age, gender, and cultural diversity.
- 5.1** Implement innovative technologies for laboratory diagnosis and monitoring of treatment responses.
- 5.2** Implement norms to improve the safety of blood supplies and blood components.

The proposed strategic lines and objectives are in line with the five strategic lines of action and objectives of the WHO framework on viral hepatitis: partnerships, technical support, and resource mobilization; surveillance, data collection, and formulation of policies; prevention and control of transmission; screening, care, and treatment; and a strategic research agenda. The adjustments hereby proposed are intended to achieve specific regional goals and targets in the short term.

The Plan of Action is in line with and builds upon the principles of the PAHO Strategy for Universal Access

to Health and Universal Health Coverage, approved through resolution CD53.R14 (2014), as well as the Strategy and Plan of Action for Integrated Child Health approved by the 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference in 2012 and PAHO Resolution on Health and Human Rights CD50.R8 (2010).

The successful implementation of this Plan of Action for the Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis for 2016–2019 will require a multi-programmatic response at national level to address the complexity of VH in the Region.