Elimination of viral hepatitis: Are we ready?

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From 27 to 28 September 2019, Ljubljana hosted the ESCMID postgraduate educational course “Elimination of viral hepatitis: Are we ready?”. Organized by the ESCMID Study Group for Viral Hepatitis, the Trainee Association of ESCMID, the Slovenian Society for Infectious Diseases, the Slovenian Society for Clinical Microbiology and Hospital Infections, the French Society for Infectious Diseases, the Italian Society for Infectious and Tropical Diseases, the University Medical Centre Ljubljana, Slovenia, the Faculty of Medicine, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia and the WHO regional office for Slovenia, the course hosted 52 participants for a successful and interactive meeting.

The course offered a strong portfolio of background information for the elimination of viral hepatitis, discussing the diverse and dynamic epidemics of viral hepatitis in Europe, the WHO global health strategy to eliminate viral hepatitis, the impact of vaccination against viral hepatitis, and the management of viral hepatitis in HIV-coinfected patients.

Focusing on hepatitis A elimination, the course featured a presentation on outbreaks of hepatitis A in Europe among men who have sex with men and beyond.

Regarding hepatitis B, the following topics were addressed: who should be treated for hepatitis B in 2019, novel approaches towards HBV cure, and challenges to diagnostic laboratories posed by HBV treatments.

Two special sessions were dedicated to the topic of hepatitis C elimination: curable, but underdiagnosed and undertreated, and microelimination of hepatitis C in special populations. Some of the main topics of these sessions included: diagnosing the undiagnosed, HCV treatment simplification, difficult-to-treat patients, and reaching migrants and people who inject drugs.

Hepatitis delta was also addressed, with an in-depth discussion of available treatment options, and hepatitis E took center stage when discussing extra-hepatic manifestations.

Furthermore, the course elaborated on strategies to overcome the barriers towards elimination of viral hepatitis, specifically barriers to HCV treatment, monitoring viral hepatitis elimination across Europe, the role of harm reduction and of the civil society in key populations, and the patient’s perspective.

Lessons for viral hepatitis elimination were also presented from different countries, specifically: the French experience, the Portuguese experience, the Romanian experience, and the Slovenian experience.

The course concluded with a roundtable discussion on where we are in terms of viral hepatitis elimination, and specifically on the role of infectious diseases and clinical microbiology specialists in eliminating viral hepatitis.

Overall, this was a very successful meeting, which provided ample opportunity for interaction and scientific collaboration for delegates from multiple countries throughout Europe.

Conflicts of interest: None to declare.

Funding: None to declare for this manuscript.

Please cite this article as:

Matičič M. Elimination of viral hepatitis: Are we ready? GERMS 2019;9(4):171. doi: 10.18683/germs.2019.1172

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