

WHO calls for intensified efforts to prevent hepatitis

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United Nations: World Health Organization (WHO) has stressed the importance of acting now to prevent hepatitis, saying infections caused by the five distinct hepatitis viruses are causing about 1.45 million deaths worldwide each year.

The message was meant for World Hepatitis Day, which fell on Tuesday this year, with a theme of "prevent hepatitis, act now", according to a UN spokesman at the daily briefing on Tuesday.

"Hepatitis B and C together alone cause approximately 80 percent of all liver cancer deaths and kill close to 1.4 million people every year," Xinhua quoted Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, as saying.

Infection through all routes of transmission can be prevented through proven and effective interventions, said Dujarric, citing WHO as the source.

"It calls on everyone to be aware of hepatitis and to learn how they can protect themselves from being infected," said Dujarric.

The date of July 28 was chosen for World Hepatitis Day in honour of the birthday of Nobel Laureate Professor Baruch Samuel Blumberg, discoverer of the hepatitis B virus and developer of the first hepatitis B vaccine.

Hepatitis viruses are transmitted through contaminated water and food, as well as by contact with blood or bodily fluids, through unsafe injections or transfusions.

Infection also occurs from a mother to a child, or through sexual contact. Infection through all these routes of transmission can be prevented through proven and effective interventions.

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