HEPATITIS C

Accelerating access to affordable treatments and supporting global elimination efforts

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a potentially fatal disease that is often called a 'silent killer' because it can go decades without detection while causing serious liver damage and even liver cancer. There are 58 million people living with HCV worldwide, despite the existence of safe, simple, and highly effective direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatments that can cure the disease in weeks. Yet just 13% of people with HCV globally have benefited from these treatments to date, largely due to poor access to simple diagnostic tests and because the drugs have been priced out of reach.

The push for progress

Together with our partners, DND*i* developed ravidasvir for use as part of an effective, simple-to-use, affordable treatment for HCV that can increase access and minimize the financial burden on patients and health systems. We have also joined with government and civil society groups in Malaysia, industry partners, including Pharco and FIND – the global alliance for diagnostics, to pioneer the 'test-and-treat' strategies needed to scale up access to diagnosis and treatment and realize ambitions to eliminate the disease worldwide.

Our goal is now to ensure access to ravidasvir for people still waiting for a cure while expanding our partnerships to bolster affordable and sustainable supply of all DAAs and foster the political will and financing needed for wide-scale roll-out of life-saving testing and treatment.

Offering new hope for people living with HCV

Following the completion of patient follow-up in 2021, DND*i* presented final results of the STORM-C-1 trial testing the combination of ravidasvir and sofosbuvir at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in early 2022. The two-stage, open-label,

FACTS

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800

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DNDi
Drugs for Neglected Diseases *initiative*

Photo credit: Abang Amirrul Hadi-DNDi

Cancer survivor **Huda** likely contracted HCV through a blood transfusion during her cancer treatment. She enrolled in the DND*i* clinical trial in Malaysia in 2017. Four years later, Huda is a graduate of the culinary arts and a proud survivor of both cancer and HCV, having been completely cured of HCV after treatment with ravidasvir and sofosbuvir.

> “Now that there is a cure, I can continue leading a normal life. Thank you so much for this treatment. I am healthy again and I am able to live better.

Phase II/III single-arm clinical trial at six sites in Malaysia and four sites in Thailand showed that 12 weeks after the end of treatment, 97% of study participants were cured. Cure rates were very high even for the hardest-to-treat patients and no unexpected safety signals were detected. Preliminary results from the study paved the way for conditional registration of the new combination treatment by Pharmaniaga in Malaysia in June 2021, with full registration expected in 2022.

Expanding access through sustainable partnerships

In July 2021, building on the success of the ravidasvir-sofosbuvir project, DND*i* launched the Hepatitis C Partnership for Control and Treatment (Hepatitis C PACT) with partners Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), FIND – the global alliance for diagnostics, and Treatment Action Group. Working closely with HCV stakeholders in target countries, Hepatitis C PACT aims to foster an enabling environment for HCV testing and treatment by rolling out all-oral cures, scaling up community-based testing to help find the missing millions of undiagnosed people, and addressing domestic financial challenges that may prevent the launch and scale-up of national programmes.

Building evidence for national HCV strategies

In late 2021, we published the results of our study with FIND and partners evaluating the decentralization of HCV testing and treatment across 25 primary healthcare clinics in Malaysia. Results demonstrated the effectiveness and feasibility of a simplified HCV testing and treatment model, which we hope will inform efforts to decentralize treatment in other settings and bring treatment closer to millions of people worldwide still waiting for a cure.