

Belgium

Carrefour Hépatites*

NGO – hepatitis patient group
Vaux-sur-Sûre, Belgium
www.hepatites.be

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The respondent reviewed 25 items of information that the government of Belgium reported for the 2013 World Health Organization Global Policy Report on the Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis in WHO Member States.

✓ The government information was thought to be accurate for **64.0%** of items.

Survey points marked "accurate":
1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5.

✗ The government information was thought to not be accurate for **36.0%** of items.

Survey points marked "not accurate":
3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.4, 4.5, 4.9, 5.3 and 5.4.

Survey comments from Carrefour Hépatites:

Information reported by government (2012–2013)

Civil society respondent comments (2014)

✓ To our knowledge, this information is accurate.

1.3 The government has a viral hepatitis prevention and control programme that includes activities targeting the following specific populations: health-care workers (including health-care waste handlers), newborns and unvaccinated adolescents.

Hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccination is free but not compulsory for those aged 0–13 since 1992.

5.1 Health professionals obtain the skills and competencies required to effectively care for people with viral hepatitis through schools of health professionals (pre-service education), on-the-job training and post-graduate training. There are national clinical guidelines for the management of viral hepatitis. These guidelines include recommendations for cases of HIV coinfection.

But no guidelines!

5.5 The following drugs for treating hepatitis B are on the national essential medicines list or subsidised by the government: interferon alpha, pegylated interferon, lamivudine, adefovir dipivoxil, entecavir and tenofovir. The following drugs for treating hepatitis C are on the national essential medicines list or subsidised by the government: interferon alpha, pegylated interferon, ribavirin, boceprevir and telaprevir.

But refunds/reimbursements are limited and restrictive – discriminatory.

* World Hepatitis Alliance member.

Belgium

Carrefour Hépatites continued

Information reported by government (2012–2013)

x *To our knowledge, this information is not accurate.*

3.5 There is no national public health research agenda for viral hepatitis. Viral hepatitis serosurveys are conducted regularly; the target population is the general population. The last serosurvey was carried out in 2006.

4.5 There is a specific national strategy and/or policy/guidelines for preventing hepatitis B and hepatitis C infection in health-care settings. Health-care workers are vaccinated against hepatitis B prior to starting work that might put them at risk of exposure to blood.

Civil society respondent comments (2014)

There is never any “public” investigation in Belgium! There has been one initiative from Schering-Plough (MSD) and two from the CHAC!

The second sentence is accurate.

Carrefour Hépatites did not provide a statement regarding key hepatitis policy issues in Belgium.

Belgium

Vlaams Hepatitis Contactpunt*

NGO – hepatitis patient group
Sint Truiden, Belgium
www.hepatitisc.be

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

The respondent reviewed 25 items of information that the government of Belgium reported for the 2013 World Health Organization Global Policy Report on the Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis in WHO Member States.

✓ The government information was thought to be accurate for **84.0%** of items.

Survey points marked "accurate":
1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10, 5.1, 5.2, 5.4 and 5.5.

✗ The government information was thought to not be accurate for **12.0%** of items.

Survey points marked "not accurate":
3.1, 4.1 and 5.3.

– The respondent took no position on the government information for **4.0%** of items.

Survey points marked "take no position":
4.9.

Survey comments from Vlaams Hepatitis Contactpunt:

Information reported by government (2012–2013)

Civil society respondent comments (2014)

✓ To our knowledge, this information is accurate.

1.1 There is no written national strategy or plan that focuses exclusively or primarily on the prevention and control of viral hepatitis.

A national strategy/plan is in progress.

1.2 There is no designated governmental unit/department responsible solely for coordinating and/or carrying out viral hepatitis-related activities. It is not known how many people work full-time on hepatitis-related activities in all government agencies/bodies.

A national reference centre is available (<https://nrchm.wiv-isp.be>) for laboratory activities.

3.3 Liver cancer cases and cases with HIV/hepatitis coinfection are registered nationally. The government publishes hepatitis disease reports annually.

We have a national register of HIV containing hepatitis C coinfection information.

4.10 It is not known whether the government has guidelines that address how hepatitis A and hepatitis E can be prevented through food and water safety.

The KCE (federal competence centre for healthcare) developed a study on Hepatitis A transmission. Guidelines are thus available for this pathogen https://kce.fgov.be/sites/default/files/page_documents/d20081027388.pdf.

✗ To our knowledge, this information is not accurate.

3.1 There is routine surveillance for viral hepatitis. There is a national surveillance system for the following types of acute hepatitis: A, B and C, but not for any type of chronic hepatitis.

The information in the first sentence is accurate. Regarding the second sentence, the information is accurate for hepatitis B through the notification system. The notification system also includes hepatitis A but not hepatitis C.

* World Hepatitis Alliance member.

Belgium

Vlaams Hepatitis Contactpunt *continued*

Information reported by government (2012–2013)

x *To our knowledge, this information is not accurate.*

5.3 People testing for both hepatitis B and hepatitis C register by name; the names are kept confidential within the system. Hepatitis B and hepatitis C tests are free of charge for all individuals and are not compulsory for members of any specific group.

Civil society respondent comments (2014)

This is a question with multiple answers. HBV and HCV tests are free of charge. The register is not by name.

Statement from Vlaams Hepatitis Contactpunt regarding key hepatitis policy issues in Belgium:

The Belgian federal government has written a national plan for 2014–2018 in collaboration with a group of hepatologists and governmental organisations. The involvement of patients' associations was asked to read the proposals and this

offered us an opportunity for feedback and suggestions. The hepatitis C plan had shortcomings in the Belgian policy that needed to be solved. On the one hand, it provided a thorough screening of the risk groups, on the other hand it also had to approve make new medicines for the Belgian patients. Unfortunately, the plan still needs approval from the different authorities (regional and

federal). This is a slowly progressing step which requires to convince different authorities. The coming elections restrain these activities.

We hope that the national hepatitis C plan will be put into action this year anyway and we will be here on a regular basis to remind the Ministers of Social Affairs (federal government) of this urgent matter.