



World Cancer Day 2010:

World Cancer Day 2010: ELPA welcomes focus on prevention of hepatitis B and C to tackle liver cancer

Brussels, 4 February 2010: on the occasion of World Cancer Day 2010, the European Liver Patients' Association (ELPA) welcomes the initiative of the Union Against Cancer (UICC) to focus on the link between infections and cancer, and in particular the effect of hepatitis B and C on the growing number of cases of liver cancer - the third highest cause of death by cancer in men.

In the past 20 years the incidence of liver cancer has more than doubled **in Europe**. In 2006 there were 50.300 new cancer cases in the European Union with 45.771 dying from this disease, 75 percent to 85 percent of cases of primary liver cancer are attributable to persistent infections with viral Hepatitis (B or C)¹.

"The prevention of viral Hepatitis is an urgent issue. This is a disease which attacks the liver and can lead to chronic conditions with fatal consequences, such as liver cancer," said Nadine Piorkowsky, ELPA president. *"Europe must collectively take action to curb the increased threat that hepatitis B and C represent to the health of all citizens".*

ELPA welcomes the UICC's call to "create new opportunities for prevention, including establishing goals and strategies for disease control, increasing education and promoting healthy lifestyles and adequate treatment of the 500 million people already infected with hepatitis B and C viruses"².

A great number of patients unfortunately remain undiagnosed: as little as 10% of hepatitis B and C patients are aware of their infections in some EU countries³. Early diagnosis is essential to tackle the "viral time bomb". *"European and national policy-makers to address the primary and secondary prevention of viral Hepatitis, as well as treatment where appropriate, in upcoming policy initiatives such as a revised Council Recommendation on Cancer Screening and future National Cancer Plans"* urged Mrs. Piorkowsky.

¹ Incidence/ mortality figures taken from <http://eu-cancer.iarc.fr/cancer-7-liver.html,en> and Bosch, FX, Ribes J, Diaz M, Cleries R. Primary Liver Cancer: Worldwide Incidence and Trends. Gastroenterology 2004; (127: 5–16)

² [Cancer can be prevented too - Protection against cancer-causing infections](#), p. 9

³ ELPA survey 2007-2008 results, available at <http://www.elpa-info.org>



About ELPA

ELPA emerged from a desire amongst European liver patient groups to share their experiences of the often very different approaches adopted in different countries. It was formally launched in 2005 during EASL annual conference and now has 21 members from 17 countries. ELPA's aim is to promote the interests of people with liver disease by furthering awareness and prevention among healthcare professionals, policymakers and the public at large. For more information, on ELPA, see www.elpa-info.org or contact Mrs Nadine Piorkowsky at elpa-president@t-online.de.

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