

Why Eradicating Hepatitis B and Liver Cancer should be a National Priority in China

根除乙肝和肝癌-中国首要任务

If you judge by the focus of international and media reports, you would think that HIV/AIDS, SARS, and the avian flu, are the major health problems facing China today. An estimated 17,000 people died of HIV in 1999, and by 2003, approximately a million people in China is living with HIV. In response to this rising threat, a national plan for AIDS prevention and control (1998-2010) has been developed and adopted. During the SARS outbreak in 2003, 5327 people in China were infected and 349 died of SARS. To date, there has been no report of death from avian flu in China. In contrast, hepatitis B which poses the greatest threat to the health of the nation has received little attention. One in ten Chinese (130 million) has chronic hepatitis B. In China, every 60 seconds, a person die from liver cancer or liver failure caused by hepatitis B. Hepatitis B is the greatest health threat and the “silent killer” in the Chinese community.

若以國際間及媒體上的報導作為一個評斷的標準, 你可能以為愛茲病, 非典, 和禽流感是中國目前所面臨的幾項重大健康問題; 据统计数据估计, 1999年时, 有一万七千的中国人死于艾滋病; 在2003年时, 约有一百万的中国人感染艾滋病毒。对此, 中国政府特别制定了一套国家性的对策及法律, 来因应这个越来越具危险性的疾病。在非典暴發大流行的時候, 受感染的5327人但中, 有349例死於非典感染; 而到目前為止, 中國還沒有人死於禽流感的案例。和這些數據比較起來, 乙肝對中國帶來的威脅性, 及其得到的关注, 真是明顯的不足。中國有十分之一的人口(約一億三千萬人)感染慢性乙型肝炎(或名乙肝攜帶者)。而且每一分鐘, 就有一個中國人死於因乙肝引起的肝癌及肝病變。乙肝才是中國人的最大威脅和無聲殺手。

China has the greatest burden of hepatitis B and liver cancer in the world. Of the 350-400 million people with chronic hepatitis B, a third of them live in China. Hepatitis B is transmitted the same way as HIV/AIDS and not by food or casual contact. Many Chinese became infected at childbirth when the mother is a hepatitis B carrier. Others became infected by injections or cuts with needles, syringes, medical or dental instruments, and blood contaminated with hepatitis B, or from unprotected sex. Most chronically infected individuals don't even know they have been infected because they often feel perfectly healthy. By the time symptoms developed, it is often too late. The reason chronic hepatitis B is so dangerous is because without treatment or regular screening for liver cancer, one in four chronically infected person will eventually die of liver cancer or liver

failure. Many die at their prime of life and as early as 30 years of age when they have many family responsibilities. Each year, an estimated half a million Chinese die of liver cancer or liver failure caused by hepatitis B.

中國是世界上乙肝及肝癌最嚴重的地區。在全球三億五千萬到四億感染乙肝的病例裡，三分之一的病例居住在中國境內。乙肝和愛滋病的傳染方法完全相同，是無法透過食物或一般的接觸傳染的。許多的中國人是透過本身是攜帶者的母親，經由母嬰垂直感染的方式感染上乙肝的。也有不少人是經由重複使用一次性的針頭，針筒，醫藥及牙科器具，還有輸入攜帶者的血液，或是經由沒有防護措施的性行為而受到感染。多數慢性攜帶者通常不知道自己是攜帶者，而且感覺十分健康正常，一直等到症狀開始出現時，一切都太晚了。慢性乙肝之所以如此危險，乃是如果沒有適當的治療或定期作肝癌的篩檢，每四個乙肝攜帶者當中，將有一名死於乙肝引起的肝癌及肝病變。很多人在人生正值巔鋒且兼付家庭重責的時候，因乙肝而失去寶貴的生命，更有不少的這樣的例子，發生在他們年僅 30 岁左右。每一年，估計有 50 萬的中國人死於因乙肝引起的肝癌及肝病變。

What is so tragic is that hepatitis B and liver cancer is largely preventable. The hepatitis B vaccine is a safe and effective vaccine that can protect the uninfected Chinese population from HBV infection and the development of liver cancer. For this reason, the Center of Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) in the US called the HBV vaccine the first “anti-cancer vaccine”. And even for those who have chronic HBV infection (often referred to as HBV carriers), most could lead normal, working lives. Many will not die with treatment of hepatitis B to prevent further damage to the liver, and regular monitoring to detect the cancer at an early stage when it could be successfully treated.

然而，乙肝及肝癌所造成的悲劇是完全可以預防避免的。中國已有安全又有效的乙肝疫苗來保護還沒受到感染的人，可以讓他們不致於得肝癌。也因為如此，美國中央疾病控制局把乙肝疫苗稱為是第一能“預防癌症”的預防針。絕多數的乙肝攜帶者，是可以正常的生活，結婚生子和工作的，而且也能透過治療，定期作肝癌的檢查來做到早期預防，早期發現，成功治癒肝病變及肝癌的目標。

The health of the young people in China holds the key to the future of the country. Children under the age of 18 years comprise of 29% of the population of China and 19 million babies are born every year. Although the adoption of a national policy since January 1st 2002, to provide newborn with free HBV vaccination is an important initial step towards reducing the incidence of hepatitis B, many children and young adults are left vulnerable to HBV infection. Many parents and healthcare providers are still not sufficiently informed about the benefits and importance of the HBV vaccine. Lessons learnt from the CDC in the US from a 20-year experience show that an effective HBV vaccination strategy must target not only the newborn, but provide HBV screening for all pregnant women, and catch-up vaccination for all children and young adults who remain vulnerable to infection. Special programs to increase awareness and education of the parents and healthcare providers are important in improving the completion rates of the three-dose vaccine.

青少年的健康將是中國的未來。 18 歲以下的青少年佔今日中國總人口數的百分之二十九;而每年出生的新生兒更達一千九百萬名之多。 中國政府在 2002 年正式立法為所有新生嬰兒免費注射乙肝疫苗,已經踏出了非常重要的第一步,然而,還是有許多幼童及少年還曝露在感染乙肝的威脅中。 這可能是因為很多的父母及醫藥人員還沒充分瞭解到乙肝疫苗的好處和重要性。 我們在美國中央疾病控制局過去的 20 年的經驗中學到的最寶貴的一課即是: 有效的疫苗策略不僅要針對新生兒而設,對孕婦採取乙肝普檢, 及對乙肝還沒有抵抗能力的兒童及青少年追加注射免費乙肝疫苗都是必要的步驟。 一套特別針對提高及教育父母和醫藥人員乙肝知識設計的科普教材,也是提高完整三針乙肝疫苗注射率的重要課題。

Despite the prevalence of hepatitis B and liver cancer in the Chinese community, many including physicians are not aware of the risk, the association of hepatitis B and liver cancer, the importance of HBV vaccination to prevent liver cancer, and the need for hepatitis B carriers to have regular liver cancer screening. Many are further confused about how hepatitis B is transmitted creating unfounded prejudices against those who are chronically infected. The Asian Liver Center at Stanford University was founded in 1996 with the goal of eradicating hepatitis B worldwide and reduces the incidence and motility of liver cancer through a three-pronged approach: research, treatment, and prevention and early detection through education and advocacy. The Jade Ribbon Campaign to fight hepatitis B and liver cancer was launched in 2001 by the Asian Liver Center at Stanford University. Partners of the campaign include the CDC, federal and state health agencies, and hundreds of community organizations and corporations. The campaign aims to raise awareness and educate both the public and the healthcare communities about the importance of hepatitis B testing and vaccination, and the prevention of liver cancer. We picked the color “jade” because it brings good luck and good health. Folded like the Chinese character meaning “people”, the Jade Ribbon is symbolic of the spirit of the campaign in uniting the people throughout the world together to eliminate hepatitis B and liver cancer, and build a healthier community.

惶論乙肝在中國人身上的高發病率, 許許多多的人, 包括醫生本身, 都還沒有意識到乙肝的危險、乙肝與肝癌之間的關係、忽視了乙肝疫苗對肝癌的防預功用、也忽視了提醒攜帶者定期做肝癌的檢查來做到早期預防、早期發現的重要。 很多醫藥專業人員甚至不清楚乙肝是如何傳染的, 進而造成一般民眾對乙肝, 對攜帶者產生許許多多的恐慌和誤解。 斯坦福大學亞裔肝臟中心在 1996 年成立之初, 就設定以科普, 科研, 以及廣泛多向的媒體倡導等三種積極的方法來達到全球性的“消除乙肝及減少肝癌發病率”的目標。 在 2001 年斯坦福大學亞裔肝臟中心更推動了翡翠絲帶的活動來對抗乙肝及肝癌。 這個活動成功的結合了美國中央疾病控制局, 聯邦級及地方級健康單位, 數百民間團體記公司行號一起來對抗乙肝和肝癌。 翡翠絲帶提醒一般民眾對乙肝的重視, 也對一般大眾及醫療專業人員進行乙肝普檢、疫苗、及預防肝癌的重要性的教育。 翡翠絲帶的顏色如玉, 相徵的是好運及健康, 絲帶特別折成“人”字的形狀, 代表的是翡翠絲帶的真正精神: 以你我一起的力量, 聯合全世界一起來消弭乙肝, 建立一個強大健康的社會。

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