



## **Hepatitis: A Rapidly Spreading Viral Infection in Pakistan**

***\*Rashid MENHAS<sup>1</sup>, Shumaila UMER<sup>2</sup>***

1. *Dept. of Sociology, Pir Mebr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Pakistan*
2. *Dept. of Sociology, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University Quetta, Pakistan*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Email: rashidminhas33@gmail.com

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### **Dear Editor in Chief**

Hepatitis has become a global public health issue. Currently, six different types of hepatitis A, B, C, D and G have been identified by medical research. According to WHO, it had been estimated in 2009 that about 180 million people were infected with hepatitis C virus in the world. At present, three to four million people are infecting every year (1). In developing countries, viral infection of hepatitis has become a major health problem and Pakistan has second highest prevalence rate of hepatitis C (2). In population perspective, Pakistan is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> most populous country with 16, 094, 3000 estimated population in the world. Spreading of viral HCV infection reported in different studies varies and its range is from 2.2-14% (3). About 10 million people are infected with HCV (4). In Pakistan, prevalence rate of HCV varies from province to province. Reported prevalence rate in Punjab is 6.7%, Sindh 5%, Baluchistan 1.5% and in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 1.1%. There are many causes spreading HCV virus in Pakistan like lack of education, poverty and environmental conditions. Majority of the population living in rural areas in Pakistan and the literacy rate is 43% but unfortunately, they are unaware about general public health knowledge (5). Hospital wastes are another major cause of HCV viral infection in Pakistan. Thousand people from child to old age are associated with garbage recycling business in Pakistan. They are not equipped with proper instruments to recycle the garbage

and recycle the garbage in indigenous way. In this way, they become the victim of HCV virus and when an individual affected from this virus, it creates many problems not only limited to physical human body but also have impacts on social, psychological, financial and sexual matters.

In Pakistan, it has become necessary for health care professional to play positive role for the eradication of HCV virus from Pakistani society. Treatment of chronic infection with hepatitis B and hepatitis C usually involves medication or combinations of medications to eradicate the virus. Doctors believe that in properly selected patients, successful eradication of the viruses can stop progressive damage to the liver and prevent the development of cirrhosis, liver failure, and liver cancer. Alcohol aggravates liver damage in chronic hepatitis, and can cause more rapid progression to cirrhosis. Therefore, patients with chronic hepatitis should stop drinking alcohol. Smoking cigarettes also can aggravate liver disease and should be stopped.

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