

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

EASL International Liver Foundation Launch the first Center of Excellence in Viral Hepatitis Elimination in Georgia

Vienna, Austria, 13 April 2019 -- The EASL International Liver Foundation (EILF), today announced the launch of the first ever Centre of Excellence in Viral Hepatitis Elimination to showcase leading efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis and to fuel other countries to kick-start or expand and enhance their programs. The initiative was developed in collaboration with the US Centers for Disease Prevention and Control.

The Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, is the first to be awarded EILF Centre of Excellence in Viral Hepatitis Elimination status. Georgia embarked on the world's first national viral hepatitis elimination program in 2015; at the time, over 7% of adults had evidence of HCV infection, and over 5% were living with HCV, about 150,000 persons. Through a partnership with Gilead Sciences, treatment was made available for every Georgian with hepatitis C. To date through the national program, more than 1.4 million adults have been screened for the virus and more than 55,000 have been treated or are in treatment.

Minister of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, Dr. David Sergeenko stated "It is a great pleasure and honor for us to be granted the status of the first EILF Centre of Excellence in Viral Hepatitis Elimination. Our unprecedented HCV Elimination Program in Georgia is a direct result of a successful public-private partnership, which originated from our close cooperation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the pharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences Inc. Through universal access to HCV diagnostics and treatment, HCV burden in Georgia is being gradually eliminated. Beyond its immediate public health impact at national level, the Program could serve as a model for other countries by generating valuable data and sharing best practices to support implementation of elimination programs in different parts of the world."

The EILF Centres of Excellence in Viral Hepatitis Elimination are intended to be distinguished providers of thought leadership, and act as knowledge hubs, fostering exchanges of research, training, good practices and lessons learnt. "Despite 194 countries pledging to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030 at the World Health Assembly in 2016, only 12 are currently on track. Our ultimate goal is to catalyze efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis globally, the EILF Centres of Excellence will serve as a resource and encourage knowledge sharing from one country to another to fast-track elimination" said EILF Chairman Prof. Massimo Colombo.

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About Viral Hepatitis Elimination

Globally, there are more than 70 million people living with chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV), and an estimated 257 million people living with hepatitis B virus (HBV), both of which causes significant morbidity and mortality as it can lead to liver damage, liver cancer and liver failure. Despite having the biomedical tools to eliminate HCV and HBV, viral hepatitis causes 1.34 million deaths globally each year.

About the EASL International Liver Foundation

Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the EASL International Liver Foundation is a global non-profit organization, established in 2016 by the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL), and is committed to increasing the quality of life and reducing premature mortality for the greatest number of people by improving liver health.

More information can be found at www.easl-ilf.org.

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