



Letter to the Editor

Awareness Campaign in (bio)Medical Students in Iran: a model for increasing the knowledge regarding hepatitis B and C

Dear Sir,

We read with interest the Lanini et al.'s review entitled 'Hepatitis C: Global Epidemiology and Strategies for Control' [1]. They mentioned healthcare-associated transmission as an important transmission route of hepatitis C virus (HCV), both for patients and healthcare workers. This transmission could be dramatically decreased by training healthcare workers regarding prevention and harm reduction. Iranian biomedical students have poor knowledge on the different aspects of hepatitis B virus (HBV) and HCV infections, such as their prevention, diagnostic methods and transmission routes [2]. Awareness campaigns can remarkably increase the knowledge of their target population [2]. After the successful experience of holding the first Hepatitis Awareness Campaign (HAC) at World Hepatitis Day 2016 by Iranian biomedical students [2], the Iran Hepatitis Network aimed to run the second HAC between 22 and 28 October, which has been considered as National Hepatitis Week each year from 2000 in Iran.

For this purpose, we used social networks to announce the Second HAC and call biomedical students to register in this campaign. We also designed brochures, posters and NOhep badges. Other NOhep materials were downloaded from the World Hepatitis Alliance website (www.worldhepatitisalliance.org). A photography competition was designed to motivate students to take photographs and share them in the social networks. In all, 343 biomedical students from 12 medical sciences universities registered at the second HAC. According to the number of registered students from each university, we considered 13 stations in Tehran and eight stations in other provinces. Tehran's stations were Tehran, Shahid Beheshti, Iran, Baqiyatallah and Shahed universities of medical sciences. Other provinces' stations were Dezful, Golestan, Semnan, Tabriz, Arak, Zanzan and Birjand medical sciences universities. Then we chose one supervisor for each station. To increase the knowledge of HAC participants, the Iran Hepatitis Network held a workshop for all students and also some extra courses for the supervisors. Furthermore, the supervisors held some other workshops for their team members to prepare them for the campaign. These trained students designed a booth in a suitable location to alert other students in their own universities. Students were asked to talk about HBV and HCV to others using brochures that contained information on viral hepatitis. Files of books related to HBV and HCV were also available through the Iran Hepatitis Network website (www.hep.ir/category/book/). The most updated national guideline for treatment of HCV in Iran [3] and published papers about the status of HCV and HBV elimination programs in Iran

[2,4,5] were available in the booth. The trained students also tried to motivate other students to check their serum level of hepatitis B surface antibody and take HBV vaccine if immunization was found to be inadequate. The HAC was successfully held by these students simultaneously in all 21 stations.

We think such campaigns can also introduce viral hepatitis as an important health issue and attract more supporters within medical science universities.

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Transparency declaration

SMA is director of the Iran Hepatitis Network. HK-S and MEB were the chief executive managers of the second Iran Hepatitis Awareness Campaign.

Authors' contribution

HK-S was responsible for concept and design. HK-S, MEB and SMA were responsible for data collection and drafting the manuscript; and SMA was responsible for critical revision and study supervision.

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