

Deaths from viral hepatitis surpasses HIV/AIDS as preventable cause of deaths in Australia

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The analysis was conducted by Dr Benjamin Cowie and Ms Jennifer MacLachlan from the University of Melbourne and Melbourne Health, and was presented at The International Liver Congress in London earlier this month.

"Liver cancer is the fastest increasing cause of cancer deaths in Australia, increasing each year by 5 per cent, so by more than seventy people each year. In 2014 there was an estimated number of deaths of around 1,500 from liver cancer. The predominant cause is chronic viral Hepatitis," Dr Cowie said.

Hepatitis refers to the inflammation of the liver. Chronic infection with the blood-borne viruses Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C can result in scarring of the liver (cirrhosis) or potentially [liver cancer](#) at a later stage – however these risks can be reduced through access to effective care and treatment.

Dr Cowie said additional resources were needed to prevent and treat Hepatitis B and C in order to address these imbalances in major preventable causes of human death.

"The release of the GBD 2010 results provides a unique opportunity to set global and local priorities for health, and address previous imbalances in addressing the major causes of preventable causes of human death,

among which hepatitis B and C must clearly be counted."

"The Commonwealth Government has recently committed to funding initiatives to improve access to testing and treatment for people from priority populations living with [hepatitis B](#) in Australia, which is a great step forward," he said.

"The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) estimated around 1.3 million people lost their lives to viral Hepatitis since 1990, which is comparable to the respective burdens of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria," Dr Cowie concluded.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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