

Hepatitis B Cure Campaign

The Hepatitis B Foundation has launched a moonshot project to find a cure for hepatitis B, an effort informed by a professional judgment document that has identified the research questions that must be answered to find a cure. It is estimated that this will require an approximate doubling of NIH research funding over 6 years.

Globally, more than 250 million individuals live with chronic hepatitis B, which contributes to an estimated 800,000 deaths each year, primarily from liver cancer—currently the 2nd leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide. **In spite of the scope of this silent epidemic, NIH annual research funding for hepatitis B is only \$49 million and has declined almost 16% since 2012 and is expected to fall even further in FY 18.**

In the late fall of 2016, and over the winter of 2017, Dr. Tim Block, President of the Hepatitis B Foundation, convened a “virtual” workshop to create a consensus blueprint identifying additional research needed to find a cure for hepatitis B infection and associated diseases such as liver cancer. More than 30 of the world’s leading experts were asked to identify the research questions necessary to fund and to answer in order to achieve this goal, and the panel produced two valuable reports that identify and discuss a roadmap for the cure.

Earlier this year and in the fall of 2016, the Hepatitis B Foundation met with the leadership of NIAID, NIDDK, and NCI to discuss the Hepatitis B Cure Campaign and to enlist their advice and support. As follow up, in January and February of this year, appropriations report language to create more funding opportunities for hepatitis B and liver cancer was requested in over 20 Congressional meetings. The language targets programs in NIH, CDC and DOD:

- The NIH language urges that the NIAID, NIDDK, NCI issue targeted calls for HBV/liver cancer research proposals in FY 2018;
- The CDC languages urges the Division of Viral Hepatitis which now spends only 5% of its budget on Hepatitis B to allocate the funding proportional to the disease burden...or up to 35% for hepatitis B; and
- The DOD language would continue to include hepatitis B and liver cancer to be eligible diseases for funding from the Department of Defense’s Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program and the Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program.

The Hepatitis B Cure Campaign has taken on new urgency in view of the fact that hepatitis C is now curable and the findings of two recent National Academy of Sciences reports that the virus could be totally eliminated. The most recent report, titled “A National Strategy for the Elimination of Hepatitis B and C: Phase Two Report,” recommends specific actions to hasten the end of these diseases and lays out five areas—including research—as an integral part of a national plan.