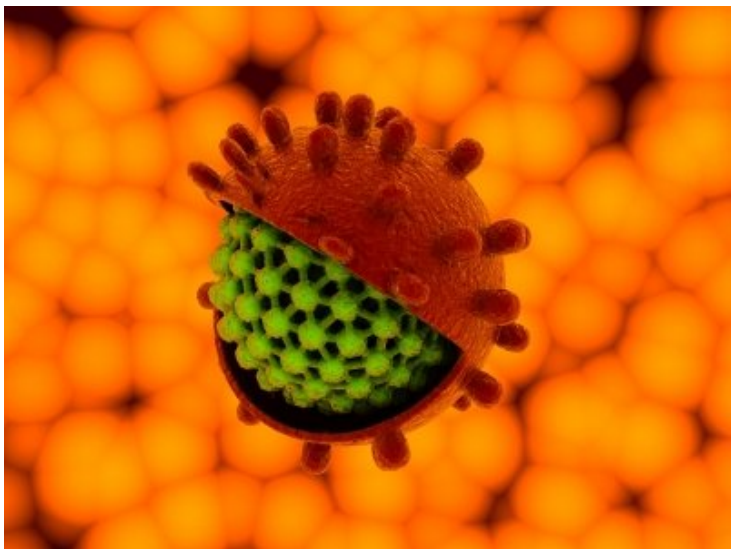# Hepatitis QLD makes plea in fight against virus

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Singapore: In a release issued last week, the peak body concerned with the disease warned that Australia already has an epidemic of chronic viral hepatitis B and C.

Speaking ahead of the World Hepatitis Day on 28 July, the CEO of Hepatitis Queensland paid tribute to the work of the state's hepatitis health professionals and community workers. "We are calling on the Queensland Government to increase funding to prevent viral hepatitis and to ensure that those living with viral hepatitis have access to treatment when it is required," said CEO of Hepatitis Queensland, Mr Clint Ferndale.

"Twenty-five years after researchers discovered the hepatitis C virus and more than 30 years since the hepatitis B vaccination was discovered, we face a situation where each year more people are developing viral hepatitis but only a fraction are being managed appropriately. It's simply not good enough. Hepatitis Queensland has a huge number of members and networks throughout the state crying out for more support, information, and better access to hepatitis treatment," he said.

Without treatment, the number of people who will progress to serious liver disease is expected to reach alarming proportions. Liver cancer primarily related to chronic viral hepatitis is now the fastest increasing cause of cancer death in Australians.

Despite more than 233,000 Australians living with chronic hepatitis C and a further 225,000 living with chronic hepatitis B, each year less than two percent of people with hepatitis C and only around five percent of people with hepatitis B are treated. In Queensland, about 68,000 people have been exposed to hepatitis C and 37,000 are living with chronic hepatitis B.

"World Hepatitis Day presents a huge opportunity for governments, healthcare professionals and local communities to come together to tackle viral hepatitis before more lives are impacted by serious liver disease," he concluded.