

**Embargoed for Release on  
Sunday, November 2, 2008**

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**Global Health Leaders Convene in San Francisco to Combat Hepatitis B Pandemic**

San Francisco, CA – More than 350 million people (one in twenty) worldwide are chronically infected with hepatitis B, the major cause of liver cancer. Most of those infected have no access to affordable treatment. Many live in fear of discrimination because of public misconceptions. Still others remain unaware they are even infected. And hundreds of millions of young people may still be vulnerable because they have not been vaccinated.

Over three quarters of these cases are concentrated in the Western Pacific and South-East Asia Regions designated by the World Health Organization (WHO). On Sunday, November 2, key representatives from these regions will gather in San Francisco to launch the Asia and Pacific Alliance to Eliminate Viral Hepatitis (APAVH), an unprecedented alliance to eradicate hepatitis B. Global elimination of new hepatitis B infection is possible through vaccination and prevention of blood borne transmission. Deaths can be avoided through timely antiviral drug treatment and discrimination can be eliminated through education.

“By focusing on these 41 countries in the two regions of the WHO which account for 76% of the global burden of chronic hepatitis B infection, APAVH aims to form broad based sustainable partnerships to advocate and spearhead the development of comprehensive regional and national policies. It will also promote the implementation of WHO regional recommendations that will ultimately eliminate hepatitis B transmission and the resultant threat of liver cancer and liver disease,” stresses Dr. Samuel So.

The inaugural APAVH Partners Meeting will establish a new multi-disciplinary alliance of government agencies, scientists, patient advocacy groups, foundations, corporations, and the pharmaceutical industry. California State **Assemblywoman Fiona Ma** will welcome over the 50 regional representatives and officials who gather at this first meeting.

An APAVH Press Conference, to be held after the meeting at 1:45pm, will announce the launch of this initiative with speakers including:

- **Dr. John Ward**, Director of the Division of Viral Hepatitis at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- **Dr. Samuel So**, the Lui Hac Minh Professor at the Stanford University School of Medicine and Executive Director of the Asian Liver Center at Stanford University
- **Dr. Steven Wiersma**, Medical Officer and Hepatitis Focal Point, Department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals at the World Health Organization

APAVH participants will discuss the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to combating hepatitis B and subsequent liver diseases, including liver cancer. Provisional goals include 1) reducing the prevalence of chronic hepatitis B infection to less than 2% in children 0-15 years of age by the year 2015 through newborn and childhood catch-up vaccination programs, 2) reducing blood borne transmission, 3) eliminating discriminatory practices and 4) increasing access to affordable antiviral treatments to reduce transmission rates and disease mortality and morbidity. Foundations, pharmaceutical companies and health organizations have already pledged their support and dedication to the initiative.

Viral hepatitis represents one of the most neglected epidemics in the world. Lacking global attention, 1 in 20 people in the world (350 million) have become chronically infected with hepatitis B. Each day 2,000 die from liver disease and cancer caused by hepatitis B, and millions bear the burden of discrimination. With the development of sustainable partnerships, APAVH will become a regional leader to develop and assist in the implementation of comprehensive regional and national strategies for the global elimination of viral hepatitis.

**APAVH Press Conference:**

**Date:** Sunday, November 2, 2008

**Time:** 1:45 pm – 2:30 pm

**Location:** Olympic Room, Westin San Francisco  
50 Third Street, San Francisco, CA

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**About the Asian Liver Center at Stanford University:** The Asian Liver Center at Stanford University is the first non-profit organization in the United States that addresses the high incidence of hepatitis B and liver cancer in Asians and Asian Americans. Founded in 1996, the ALC has grown to become a national and international leader in fighting this global epidemic through outreach, education, advocacy, and research. Visit the ALC website for more information: <http://liver.stanford.edu/>

**About the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) seeks “to promote health and quality of life by preventing and controlling disease, injury, and disability” by working with partners throughout the nation and the world. In collaboration with domestic and global partners, the Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) provides the scientific and programmatic foundation and leadership for the prevention and control of hepatitis virus infections and their manifestations.