



CHIPO: Coalition Against Hepatitis

for People of African Origin

Coalition Call Minutes

January 27th, 2025

2:00pm-3:00pm EST

[Zoom Link](#)

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Attendees: Please let me know if I missed you, misspelled your name, or got only your partial information!

Beatrice Zovich (Hep B Foundation), Quinn Plunkett (Hep B Foundation), Assita Belemkoabga (Project HONE, Mount Sinai, NYC), Elizabeth Koch (Division of Population Health, Columbus, OH), Seun Aluko (Division of Population Health, Columbus, OH), Lutamaguzi Emma Bakojja (Hepatitis Aid Organization, Uganda), Syreeta Wilkins (National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants, and Migrants, Minnesota), Nicollate Okoko (Zidkijah Medical Center, Kenya), Linnea Schenck (Philadelphia, PA Department of Public Health), Janet Afoakwah (United States Coalition for African Immigrant Health), David Irinam (Bekwarra Hepatitis B Support Advocacy Initiative, Cross River State, Nigeria), Tongai Maponga (National Health Laboratory Service, Cape Town, South Africa), Jordanne Ching (clinical researcher, Cameroon), Ibrahim Usman Yerima (Jeneso Development Initiative, Nigeria), Sunyasemeni Almond Ezra (Jeneso Development Initiative, Nigeria), Bilan Hussein (Division of Population Health, Columbus, OH), Chari Cohen (Hep B Foundation), Luul Ahmed (Division of Population Health, Columbus, OH), Alma Chavez (Hep Free NYC), Leso Munala (university of Minnesota), Peyton Thompson (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Maurizio Bonacini (California Pacific Medical Center Research Institute, San Francisco, CA), Dolapo King (Division of Population Health, Columbus, OH), Manal Ghazzawi (KnowHep Sierra Leone), Heather Richmond (Dynavax)

2:00 pm: Welcome and Updates:

- **Welcome to our new member!** Supreme Care Health Foundation, Nigeria
- **New Screening Resource for Healthcare Providers:** The Hep B Foundation has developed [a new screening resource](#) for hepatitis B, outlining the best practices for screening (including insurance codes) and result interpretation, all in one place.
- **New Vaccine Resource for Healthcare Providers:** The Hep B Foundation has also developed a [new hepatitis B vaccine resource](#) with valuable information for healthcare providers.
- **New Hepatitis Delta Survey Launch:** The Hepatitis B Foundation has recently launched a new survey to capture the lived experience of those living with and indirectly impacted by hepatitis delta. Please share with your networks – there is also an opportunity to indicate if respondents would like to participate in a more in-depth interview with the research team. [The survey can be found here.](#)
- A recent [New Yorker article](#) highlighted hepatitis B in the mainstream media, which is unusual!
- **New article on hepatitis B care costs:** A new research article focused on the catastrophic costs faced by patients and families living with hepatitis B.
- [Another recent article](#) emphasizes the need to end stigma and discrimination.
- A [new training module](#) from the B Informed Training Hub focuses on diagnosing and treating hepatitis B and delta.
- The Hep B Foundation's survey about the perspectives of individuals living with liver disease on the COVID-19 vaccine will close in February – if you have not yet filled it out or disseminated it to your networks, please do so! The survey is available in ten languages, including [English](#), [French](#), and [Swahili](#).
- The highlighted #justB story for February is from PMF, who describes his experiences of facing discrimination in nursing school due to his hepatitis B status. [Check out his story here.](#)
- The Hep B Foundation is hosting the next in-person #justB storytelling workshop in Philadelphia in April. This is a great opportunity for those living with and affected by hepatitis B and delta to connect with others, receive

support, and share their stories in order to raise awareness, provide accurate information, and lessen the stigma around hepatitis B. [Learn more and sign up today!](#)

2:15 pm: Presentation

- **Dr. Tongai Maponga**, Senior Medical Scientist, Division of Medical Virology, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences at the National Laboratory Service in Cape Town, South Africa
 - **Prevalence of Hepatitis B:** An estimated 2 to 5 million people in South Africa are living with chronic hepatitis B
 - **Hepatitis B Transmission Risk:** Infection acquired in infancy carries a 90% chance of developing into chronic hepatitis B, while adult infection has a less than 5% chance.
 - **Hepatitis B Vaccination Strategy:** Introducing the vaccine at the right time is crucial for achieving significant impact and eliminating hepatitis B as a public health concern.
 - **Impact of HIV on HBV Transmission:** High HIV prevalence in South Africa, particularly among mothers, increases the risk of vertical transmission of HBV
 - **Need for Modified Vaccination Schedule:** The existing vaccination schedule, with the first dose at six weeks, is inadequate given the high risk of vertical transmission, necessitating advocacy for changes.
 - **Birth Dose Vaccine Importance:** Highlighting the need for the birth dose vaccine, to prevent chronic hepatitis.
 - **Low Vaccine Coverage:** Birth dose vaccine coverage remains poor
 - **Concerning Hepatitis B Test Positivity Rate:** Alarming high test positivity rate for hepatitis B in children under five in South Africa, despite infant vaccination programs since 1995.
 - **Hepatitis B Prevalence in Pregnant Women:** Almost 12% of positive tests in South Africa are from pregnant women, highlighting the need for improved prevention strategies.
 - **Limited Treatment Access:** Despite the importance of treatment for chronic hepatitis B, access is limited, particularly for those without HIV co-infection.
 - **Treatment Disparity:** Individuals with both hepatitis B and HIV have better access to treatment due to the effectiveness of HIV medications against hepatitis B.
 - **Lack of Education and Awareness:** Insufficient education and awareness exist among patients, the public, and healthcare workers
 - **Data Quality and Response Challenges:** Poor-quality data hinders effective response to the problem
 - **Importance of Collaboration:** Collaboration is crucial for addressing the lack of quality and locally relevant data.
 - **SOLDA:** An organization promoting collaboration, responsibility, transparency, independence, and flexibility to address health challenges in Africa.
 - **HEPSANET Project:** A collaborative research network to understand and develop programs for the prevention and treatment of infections and diseases
 - **Gaps in Implementing Policies:** Identifying gaps in implementing policies, such as vaccination recommendations for specific groups and the need for data to inform these policies.
 - **Community Engagement and Storytelling:** Highlighting the importance of community engagement and storytelling in understanding the experiences of individuals living with chronic hepatitis and their families.
 - **Prenatal Care Access in South Africa:** Information that over 80% of pregnant women in South Africa visit antenatal clinics, providing an opportunity for hepatitis B screening and treatment.
 - **Hepatitis B Testing in Pregnant Women:** High prevalence of hepatitis B in pregnant women in South Africa, with successful implementation of rapid testing and evaluation of its diagnostic performance.

2:50pm: Q&A

- **Cost of Hepatitis B Testing:** Inquiry about the cost of hepatitis B surface antigen testing in South Africa, and the government's payment for the tests.
- **Integrating Hepatitis B Services:** A question was raised about leveraging existing HIV infrastructure to support hepatitis B screening, vaccination, and treatment, particularly for those with dual infections.

- **Shift in Hepatitis B Treatment Model:** In the past year, the treatment model for hepatitis B has shifted from separate clinics to integrated care within the ID clinic, addressing the needs of patients with HIV, TB, and hepatitis B.
- **Standardized Care for Hepatitis Patients:** Implementing standardized care protocols for hepatitis patients, regardless of their HIV status, to improve access to essential services.
- **Tanzania Program Update:** Dr. Maurizio Bonacini is working on a program in Western Tanzania to identify pregnant women with hepatitis, provide treatment, and evaluate the transmission rate, highlighting logistical challenges.
- **Question about Delta Testing Rate in Africa:** Hepatitis delta testing is rarely conducted and is almost non-existent in Africa. A significant percentage of people in Africa are likely to carry the delta virus.

2:55pm: Member Updates – please feel free to email any updates or events to the listserv!

3:00 pm: Conclusion

Our next regularly scheduled meeting will be on **Wednesday March 19th at 2pm EST.**

Thanks so much for joining! Please keep us updated about research and programmatic news and let us know if you'd like to present at the next meeting!

