



**Viral Hepatitis  
Prevention Board**

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**Executive Secretary**  
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Subject: The Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board endorses the World Hepatitis Day on 19 May 2009.

To whom it may concern,

On behalf the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board I'm pleased to inform you that we support the organisation of an annual World Hepatitis Day.

The major objective of the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board (VHPB), established in 1992, is to contribute to the control and prevention of viral hepatitis, by drawing the attention to this important public health problem, by issuing prevention guidelines, and by encouraging actions to improve control and prevention. VHPB focus audiences are, in the first instance, policymakers, opinion leaders, and health care professionals in Europe.

There is a clear lack of attention towards prevention and control of viral hepatitis. Major gaps exist towards surveillance of acute cases and data on chronic viral hepatitis is almost non-existing. Although on the level of primary prevention of hepatitis B infection significant achievements can be reported, at the end of 2008 175 of 193 WHO member states had introduced universal vaccination, a lot still needs to be done. The benefit of vaccination against hepatitis B is sometimes perceived as limited, leading to rejection of vaccination. Awareness of the real disease menace is crucial and the value of protection against infection needs continuous promotion. Young chronic hepatitis B patients are testimonies of the breaches in the current prevention programmes.

Taken into account the importance and relevance of this initiative the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board endorses the overall objectives of the World Hepatitis Day. We hope that this patient driven initiative will have a major global impact on the general awareness of Viral Hepatitis, and will increase the political commitment to prevent and control viral hepatitis infection and its consequences.

On behalf of the Viral Hepatitis Prevention Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Van Damme', written over a large, stylized circular flourish.

Prof Pierre Van Damme  
Executive Secretary