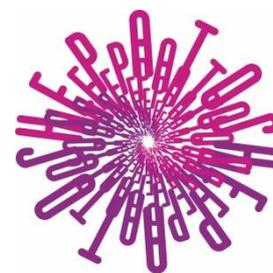




9. - 12. 06. 2021.
Zagreb, Rijeka/Opatija



Held under the high auspices of the
President of the Republic of Croatia



Hepatos

Croatian Society
For The Liver Diseases

CROATIAN LIVER WEEK

"Old problems in the new
COVID19 / post COVID19 era"



Held under the auspices of
the Ministry of Health

EVENT REPORT

Croatian Society for the Liver Diseases "Hepatos", for the fifth year in a row, has successfully organized an high-level international event gathering the eminent representatives from most influential European and Croatian institutions and organizations dealing with liver diseases.

After last year's successful organization of a high level international event included in the list of official events during the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Hepatos Society, this year in cooperation with the Croatian Gastroenterological Society, has extended the event to a whole week. In order to continue its decades long efforts gathering information and updating the health community, the public sector and the general public about the problems that liver diseases, such as "silent liver epidemics" (viral hepatitis and fatty liver) and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) impose on society as a whole, for the first time ever, Croatian Liver Week entitled "Old problems in the new COVID19 / post COVID19 era" has been organized.

In the period 09.-12.06.2021, as part of the event, we have organized:

- two-day international expert meeting with the political goal:
 - ❖ Day 1: "HCC as a result of unmet needs of "silent liver epidemics"" June 9, 2021, Zagreb
 - ❖ Day 4: "NASH day as a part of the Croatian Liver Week" June 11, 2021, Opatija
- two-day public action with a mobile clinic - Mobile InfoHep Center:
 - ❖ Day 2: International NASH Day, June 10, 2021, Zagreb
 - ❖ Day 3: International NASH Day, June 11, 2021, Rijeka

Activities have taken place in 3 Croatian cities under the high auspices of the President of the Republic of Croatia and under the auspices of the Ministry of Health. Also worth mentioning is the fact that the events received official support from The European Association for the Study of Liver (EASL) and were joined by 500+ participants from 15 countries from 4 continents.

DAY 1, 09.06.2021.

International high level expert meeting with a political goal held at the Hotel Dubrovnik, Zagreb

"HCC as a result of the unmet needs of "silent liver epidemics"", an high-level international expert meeting with a political goal began with an address by prof. Thomas Berg, Secretary General (at the time Vice Office: Doverska 29, Split Mobile InfoHep Centar: Medical vehicle - „Screening Van“ www.hepatos.hr
hepatos@hepatos.hr InfoHep Center: Fra Bone Razmilovića 11, Split OIB:05582843154
Tel: + 38521459988 INFO tel: 0800 400 405 IBAN: HR5224070001100573436

Secretary) of EASL, who pointed out that "... COVID 19 pandemic remains a major challenge that has affected and changed medical societies and medical science in general." But that does not change the fact that liver cancer, one of the 10 most common cancers in Croatia, is on the rise in Europe, making it a priority at the European level.

Given that "in 2019, about 170,000 people died from liver diseases as a result of the hepatitis B and C viruses." as pointed out by Dr. Iva Pejnović Franelić, newly appointed Liaison Officer at the World Health Organization (WHO) Office Croatia, the Global Progress Report has documented many important developments, both globally and in the region, including continuing political commitment, adoption of national plans to eliminate hepatitis in more and more countries, facilitating easier access to hepatitis treatment, especially hepatitis C, a significant decline in mortality trends, indicating the effectiveness of essential interventions along the continuum of care. However, this report also revealed and pointed out shortcomings such as the disproportion of diagnoses and the need to speed up the path to elimination in most countries, which can mostly be achieved, according to prof. Adriana Vince, "by expanding the screening for treatment, raising awareness, changing the way indicators are monitored, continuously educating primary care physicians and their teams, and a multidisciplinary approach to the at-risk population that has been insufficiently tested in most countries."

The meeting consisted of 3 sessions to which we were introduced by prof. Stjepko Pleština, who in his state of the art lecture, pointed out that "liver cancer has a mortality /incidence rate of about 93%, which makes it the cancer with the worst prognosis. The global incidence remains the highest in developing regions with men having approximately three times higher risk of developing liver cancer than women. About 80% of new liver cancer cases are reported in less developed regions, however in Western European countries as well as in the United States we can see about a 5% increase in the annual incidence of hepatocellular carcinoma. In the Republic of Croatia, HCC is currently the seventh leading cause of death from cancer, and more than 50% of all patients with advanced hepatocellular carcinoma are not eligible for surgical treatment."

The sessions presented, in more detail, the current picture of HCC in Croatia, showed great strides in the diagnosis and treatment of HCC in the last 20 years, the need for multi-systematic monitoring of liver disease (which, as shown in the presentation of Dr. Borislav Belev, is " of great importance in the current decision-making process in the treatment of HCC "), touched on political plans such as the EU for Health 2021, pointed to the need for further, intensified efforts of the Croatian and global community to accelerate their path to elimination, in line with WHO Europe recommendations for viral hepatitis elimination, as one of the main causes of HCC, and further draw attention to the need to raise awareness and strengthen efforts of the growing fatty liver problem, especially nonalcoholic fatty liver disease as well as other liver diseases since their neglect can lead to further complications such as hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC).

Considering that HCC is a great challenge for which, only now, there are some new treatment possibilities on a horizon prof. Tajana Filipec Kanižaj, stated that "HCC is one of the fastest growing global indication for liver transplantation" and that " a lot of efforts should be made in order to improve our screening programs and prevent the development of HCC."

The lecture of Dr. Andre Ilbawi from the WHO on the topic of the Cancer Report published last year attracted a lot of attention from the gathered audience. "The number of cancer diagnoses is expected to double in the next 10 years and will be the leading cause of premature death globally in the coming decades. An increase in the burden of cancer will also affect the economy. Bearing in mind that more than the half of patients become aware of their diagnosis at a late stage of disease this has the consequence, in addition to increased mortality, of an increased need for additional care which is contributing to the increased costs. "

The rapidly growing global burden of cancer, presents additional challenges to the individuals, societies as well as families, and is an additional reason to invest in prevention, better screening and availability of therapies.

The presenters also discussed the COVID-19 threat to public health, which certainly needs special attention, however it pointed out the importance of not neglecting previous achievements in public health, especially in the fight against liver disease. The global consequences of the pandemic are still unknown as we are still unfamiliar with the results of neglect of the liver patients' during the pandemic and slowing down and / or reversal, which in

some parts of the world has led to the loss of the hard-won momentum, in the elimination of viral hepatitis as well as other liver diseases.

Given that the priorities of both the EU and the Republic of Croatia are set in terms of preventing cancer caused by infections (such as hepatitis C), efforts to achieve the goal of the World Health Organization (WHO) i.e. elimination of viral hepatitis by 2030 contribute to this priority.

Prof. Adriana Vince pointed out the "the biggest challenges of getting viral hepatitis back into focus, as well as the doubt whether we will achieve elimination, but that should not be the reason nor an excuse why we should not return focus to the problem because the mortality is huge. It would be best to apply the national hepatitis guidelines, which most countries have introduced into their national hepatitis plans as per WHO guidelines, but they are simply not being implemented. As for Croatia, we have completed the National action plan in 2019, but it has not been implemented, is still sitting in the Ministry of Health with nothing being done about it." She stressed the need to establish a national screening program or implement some new research in the general population just to see where we are at the moment. Prof. Vince also highlighted that the Medical Society is currently focused on reorganization after the COVID period and on vaccinations against COVID-19 that depleted the system. "As the COVID 19 problem will not go away, patient organizations should take an active part, express their needs and concerns and talk about forgotten needs of liver patients."

Prof. Musić Milanović pointed out the need to improve eating habits in Croatia, given that, in 2017, almost every fifth adult in Croatia was obese, which is higher than the EU average (18% compared to 15%). And the data on the increase in the rate of overweight and obese children is especially worrying. Given that more than half of adults (54%) do not eat fruit every day, and vegetable consumption is very low as almost 45% of adults do not eat vegetables every day, the necessary improvement will not occur without a significant change in awareness of the general public.

DAY 2, 10.06.2021.

Public action with the Mobile InfoHep Center marking the INTERNATIONAL NASH DAY, Cvjetni trg, Zagreb from 10 am to 1 pm

In accordance with the information presented during the previous day, and on the occasion of the International NASH Day, public health actions were organized providing services of Mobile InfoHep Center, a medical vehicle equipped to provide services in the field, to general public. On June 10, 2021, marking the International NASH Day, with the support and cooperation of the Health Office of the City of Zagreb and CH Merkur experts, the general public was offered Mobile InfoHep Center services, i.e. liver examination by transient elastography with FibroScan® device, testing for hepatitis C with rapid saliva tests, and counseling on the busiest city square in Zagreb.

DAY 3, 11.06.2021.

Public action with the Mobile InfoHep Center marking the INTERNATIONAL NASH DAY, Korzo, Rijeka from 10 am to 2 pm

The marking of the International NASH Day continued on June 11 with a public action on Korzo in Rijeka, in cooperation with CHC Rijeka, where the services of the Mobile InfoHep Center were once again offered to the general public. The public educational campaign of the International NASH Day was marked for the first time on June 12, 2018 with the aim of increasing the visibility and urgency of educating the general public about non-alcoholic fatty liver diseases that affect more than 115 million people worldwide.

DAY 4, 12.06.2021.

International expert meeting held at the Hotel 4 Opatijska cvijeta, in Opatija.

Given the public health significance of International NASH day, this event has placed special emphasis on NASH as a "silent epidemic of the 21st century." Following the two public health actions aiming to raise awareness about NASH among medical community, this event closed out the Croatian Liver week by presenting

Office: Doverska 29, Split
hepatos@hepatos.hr
Tel: + 38521459988

Mobile InfoHep Centar: mobile vehicle - „Screening Van“
InfoHep Center: Fra Bone Razmilovića 11, Split
INFO tel: 0800 400 405

www.hepatos.hr
OIB:05582843154
IBAN: HR5224070001100573436

the current NAFLD/NASH situation in the region. The event gathered, in person as well as virtually, eminent European experts in the field of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, as well as fellow cardiologists, endocrinologists and pediatricians. Given the public health importance of liver diseases, the aim of this event was to point out the importance of a common approach to diagnosis and monitoring of these patients.

By organizing these very successful events, the Hepatos Society has clearly shown that Croatia can lead this part of Europe in liver health and care for patients with liver disease as well as work on raising awareness and strengthening health efforts in the prevention of liver cancer and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC).

The importance of liver health, which is increasingly coming into the focus of the Croatian public, was emphasized not only by the results, data and statistics of eminent lecturers during the two-day international expert meeting, but also by the large response during the two-day public action by Mobile InfoHep Center and the attention of the media that interviewed the participants on each day of the events.

The event was praised by gathered experts, related organizations and individuals for its "excellent and very current program that covers topics of greatest interest".

These events* were made possible thanks to generous support from:



and



*4th day has been made possible thanks to support from (in alphabetic order): Abbot, Amgen, Bayer, Dr Falk, Fresenius Kabi, Gilead Medicopharmacia, Janssen, Krka, Oktal pharma, Pliva, Roche, Sandoz