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<b>REPORTER:</b>	<b>Mohssen Arshie</b>

# 'Victory over hepatitis C in the offing'

**Mohssen Arshie**

**THERE** are growing signs that Egypt's fierce battle against the rampaging hepatitis C infection will end with success in 2022.

Dr. Amr Kandil, chief of the Preventive Medicine Sector, has made this optimistic forecast. His opinion, he said, was based on the results of a demographic survey, which showed that the highly infectious disease had slowed down by 2.8 per cent in 2015.

He said that the recently completed

survey, the largest in the world, had targeted about 26,000 patients in 25 governorates.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO) report last year, the deadly epidemic disease claimed the lives of 40,000 Egyptians. It said that at least one in ten of the population aged 15 to 59 was infected. Dr. Kandil said that the number of victims ranged between 4 and 4.5 million.

The use of Sovaldi with other antiviral medicines, such as Interferon and Ribavirin has had encouraging results.

Chronically ill people are now optimistic about their chances of survival.

Stepping up its efforts in this war, the Ministry of Health's National Committee for the Control of Viral Hepatitis (NCCVH) has increased the import of new antiviral medicines to help more than 4,000 hepatitis patients.

The weekly magazine, *October*, disclosed that the manufacturer of the main, new drug will soon help 500,000 chronically-diseased patients renew their hope in life.

The national antiviral campaign has

also received a big boost from seven Egyptian companies. According to NCCVH's head, Dr. Wahid/Dos, the Egyptian companies are waiting for the signal before starting to supply home-made Sovaldi to the local market. The intervention by local companies will reduce the cost of treatment to LE2,000 from LE6,000 currently. Economists are emphasising that the new strategy will have a very positive impact on the state budget allocated to health care in society.

Dr. Dos said that the locally manu-

factured drug would definitely reduce the financial costs for patients, who cannot afford the expensive treatment.

A comprehensive treatment strategy in this respect would also largely reduce the four-month waiting-list of patients to only four or five days.

The hepatitis C infection claims a larger number of helpless victims in villages and slums than in affluent communities.

Doctors said the symptoms of the blood-borne virus take a long time to appear. Most infected people remain

long unconscious that they are infected. The alarm is only raised several years later as the symptoms develop.