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# New anti-HCV drug to make debut soon

HAVING overcome bilharzia, the main cause of liver cirrhosis in Egypt, Egyptians now face hepatitis C virus (HCV), yet another cause of cirrhosis. It has prompted the Ministry of Health to form the National Committee for Controlling Viral Hepatitis (NCCVH).

The committee which comprises a large number of pioneer professors of liver disease is concerned to cure patients with HCV.

The Ministry recently approved a new drug for sale – Qurevo – on the local market to treat hepatitis C virus genotype four that Egyptians suffer from. This was announced by Minister of Health and Population Dr Ahmed Emad at a recent Cairo press conference.

Qurevo was preceded by other drugs, such as Sovaldi, which is prescribed in combination with interferon and ribavirin. The new drug, which is taken orally, is free

of interferon and ribavirin. It gives a 100 per cent recovery rate.

Minister Dr Emad said the drug would be available at liver treatment centres in a few days. An agreement has been made to import the drug in Egyptian pounds and not US dollars.

Dr Wahid Doss, NCCVH Chairman, pointed out that the prevalence rate for HCV is seven per cent of the population. This means that six million people have the disease, according to a nationwide survey by the committee.

Dr Doss said that there were 44 liver centres treating HCV nationwide with a unified treatment protocol and the number is expected to increase to 100. The new drug, he said, should reach 300,000 to 500,000 patients with HCV in 2016.

Dr Manal Hamdi el Sayyed, Professor of Hepatology and NCCVH member, said that the committee has implemented a strat-

egy for treating HCV in collaboration with WHO, to be a model that could be carried out in other countries.

Hepatologists from other countries, such as Georgia and Pakistan, will come to train on the therapeutic and preventive programme for HCV applied in Egypt, which is based on infection control, monitoring, blood transfusion safety, injection safety, awareness and the role of the media.

Dr Gamal Essmat, Professor of Hepatology and NCCVH, member said that though there are six million people with HCV, only one million have been diagnosed with it. The committee, he said, is concerned to draw up a plan to achieve comprehensive health care for patients with liver diseases through continuous monitoring even after they have got rid of the virus. The plan is ambitious. It aims to cover two per cent of the HCV prevalence rate in the coming ten years.



"AN agreement has been made to import the new drug in Egyptian pounds and not US dollars," Minister of Health Dr Ahmed Emad, 3rd from right announced in press conference held recently.