



China – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 11 June 2010

RE: Any Information regarding the lack of medical care in China for people who suffer from Hepatitis B.

A 2009 editorial from the *Chinese Medical Journal* states:

“Problems are further exacerbated because without prompt diagnosis and standard antiviral treatment, chronic hepatitis B patients will develop liver cirrhosis and liver cancer. Fortunately, standardized antiviral treatment is becoming available which can delay or suspend the progress of the disease by long-term suppression of HBV replication, and attenuation of liver cell necrosis and fibrosis. This therapy also reduces or may even prevent complications of the disease, as well as improve the patients' quality of life and even extend their survival time. Therefore, there is an immediate need to promote antiviral treatments for chronic hepatitis B in China. According to a recent survey, only 19% of chronic hepatitis B patients have received antiviral treatments. Worse yet, only 55% of health care workers have knowledge of standard antiviral treatment for the chronic hepatitis B. Perhaps not surprisingly, 73% of physicians only use Chinese herbs and/or other hepatoprotective agents to treat chronic hepatitis B. In addition, the lack of a general education program for the whole population has led to serious discrimination against chronic hepatitis B patients. In fact, 38% chronic hepatitis B patients believe the fake drug advertisement.” (Chinese Medical Journal 2009;122(1):3-4 3 Management of hepatitis B in China)

A 2010 factsheet from the *World Health Organization* states:

“There is no specific treatment for acute hepatitis B. Care is aimed at maintaining comfort and adequate nutritional balance, including replacement of fluids that are lost from vomiting and diarrhea.

- Chronic hepatitis B can be treated with drugs, including interferon and antiviral agents, which can help some patients. Treatment can cost dozens of thousands of RMB per year and is not affordable to everyone.
- Patients with cirrhosis are sometimes given liver transplants, with varying success.
- Liver cancer is almost always fatal, and often develops in people at an age when they are most productive and have family responsibilities.” (World Health Organization in China (22 April 2010) *China Press Release Hepatitis B*)

A 2002 article from *Hepatitis Magazine* states:

“A significant number of chronic HBV patients are not treated with drug therapy. This can be due to personal choice, a lack of money to pay for drug treatments, living in an area where there is no access to these treatments, or being unaware of the disease until it is late stage. Among people who are aware of their disease, TCM is often the treatment of choice.” (Hepatitis Magazine (Spring 2002) *Chronic Hepatitis B and C in China*)

A 2007 article from *Bloomberg* states:

“In America, about 8 people die every day from the illness. In China, hepatitis B kills about 808 people daily, making it one of the most neglected public health threats in the world. Many Chinese haven't gotten medicine because of the stigma and the expense. Now, Cheng's activities and a growing middle class of 300 million people may open doors for Western pharmaceutical companies such as Bristol-Myers Squibb & Co. and GlaxoSmithKline Plc, which sell drugs to treat the virus.” (Bloomberg (December 26 2007) *Deaths in China From Hepatitis B Prompt Bristol, Glaxo Urgency*)

A 2008 report from the *World Health Organization* states:

“The country has remained polio-free since 1994 and the incidence of immunization-targeted diseases, such as measles and diphtheria, has declined significantly. Currently the Expanded Programme on Immunization also includes hepatitis B vaccine, with a rate of 88% for timely Hep B birth dose delivery in 2006. The Government recently expanded the immunization programme to include vaccines to prevent 12 diseases (TB, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, hepatitis B, Japanese encephalitis, meningococcal meningitis, hepatitis A, rubella, mumps and measles, as well as leptospirosis, anthrax and epidemic hemorrhagic fever). Vaccines now exist for pneumonia and diarrhoea in young children and the Government will be considering whether and how to introduce these vaccines in the future. The 11th Five Year Plan stipulates that the immunization rate should reach more than 90% by 2010.” (World Health Organization (2008) *China: "Country Health and Information Profile"*)

A *New York Times* article detailing the state suppression of a Hepatitis NGO states:

“There is widespread trepidation over hepatitis B in China, a fear that has been intensified by an explosion in advertising for medical testing services and sham cures. Even though it is preventable with a vaccine — and most of those infected will not become ill — state-owned companies, medical schools and food-processing plants have come to believe that it is sensible policy to bar the infected.

Under Chinese law, carriers of hepatitis B cannot work as teachers, elevator operators, barbers or supermarket cashiers. In a recent survey of 113 colleges and universities, conducted by the Yi Ren Ping Center, 94 acknowledged that infected applicants, required to take blood tests, would be summarily rejected.” (New York Times (31 July 2009) *Hepatitis Group Is Harassed in China*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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