

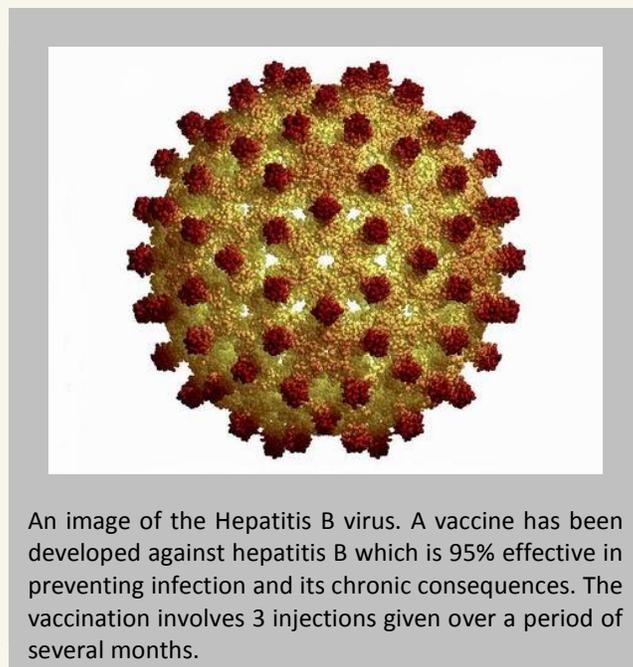
LIVER DISEASE AFFECTS 6% OF THE EU POPULATION

In February the European Association for the Study of the liver (EASL) launched a new publication on the **Burden of Liver Disease in Europe** which includes some sobering statistics. The authors estimate that 6% of the EU population - approximately 29 million people – are affected by liver disease. In Europe, the leading causes of cirrhosis and primary liver cancer are viral hepatitis B and C, alcohol and metabolic syndromes related to overweight and obesity. Liver disease is the EU's 5th biggest killer, accounting for one in six deaths.

Mark Thursz, current EASL General-Secretary, did however sound an optimistic note: ***“what is encouraging is that each of the major causes of liver disease is potentially amenable to prevention and treatment”***.

VIRAL HEPATITIS: Approximately 1 in 12 people worldwide are living with chronic viral hepatitis B or C infection and together these viruses are the leading cause of primary liver cancer and amongst the top 10 infectious disease killers globally. Both viruses are capable of provoking two distinct clinical outcomes after exposure – spontaneous control, or the development of a persistent infection which can lead to chronic liver injury with final development of cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma.

The work of our Viral Hepatitis team: The key to the development of new and more effective treatments for viral hepatitis is in understanding the fundamental differences in host response between patients who undergo spontaneous resolution of infection compared to those who become chronically infected.



The overall research objective of Dr Shilpa Chokshi and her research group in the Institute is to investigate the mechanisms responsible for these two different outcomes.

Among several projects that the group has underway is one in conjunction with Bristol Meyers Squibb to evaluate the safety and efficacy of monotherapy with pegylated interferon lambda in chronic HBV patients. This multi-centre trial, coordinated by Dr Sandra Phillips and Sameer Mistry in the Institute, involves the analysis of samples from 40 Patients from 10 sites at 9 timepoints. Scientific endeavour apart, the team are learning quite a lot about logistics! To date, Sandra and Sameer have trained 14 sites internationally to perform lymphocyte separation from blood of viral hepatitis patients, achieving 95% viability and 90% recovery of samples. Samples are then frozen and sent to the Institute where the next stage of analysis will be carried out.

Salvatore Papa joins editorial board of *Oncogene*

Dr Salvatore Papa, Head of the Cell Signalling and Cancer Group in the Institute, has joined the Editorial Board of *Oncogene*, a leading international journal of oncology which is part of the Nature Publishing Group. *Oncogene* is currently ranked 18th of the 194 journals of oncology, based on the impact factor of the papers it publishes. As an editorial board member, Dr Papa will support the journal by managing the review process and refereeing scientific manuscripts. This is a great achievement by Dr Papa and reflects his international standing in the field of oncology and molecular biology.

Links with colleagues in Europe

Congratulations also go to another member of the research team, Dr Elena Palma, who has got a bursary to spend two months at the laboratory of leading mitochondrial expert, Dr Luca Scorrano, in Padua, Italy. Elena will be expanding on her work into the impact of alcohol on mitochondrial dysfunction.

**Watch our scientists describe their work
and how we are tackling liver disease:**
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Dr Salvatore Papa and his team in the lab

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their liver at some point in their life**



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