

PRESS RELEASE

February 24, 2021

During the Covid pandemic, hepatitis B continues its silent, yet devastating effects
"the most recent virus, SARS CoV 2, must not overshadow the oldest virus sequenced in humans, which has taunted us for over 7,000 years"
This is a call to civil society to help change opinions regarding this liver disease.

While the Covid pandemic remains understandably at the centre of all our concerns, silently the hepatitis B virus continues its devastating course around the world, killing thousands of people daily through liver cirrhosis or cancer. However, this could be surmounted thanks to a very effective vaccine.

Initiated in mid-2019, the Estates General of Hepatitis B, in French "États Généraux de l'Hépatite B", objective is to highlight the consequences of hepatitis B in France and formulate proposals for a more volunteer based policy against this disease. At the end of an unprecedented mobilization, lasting more than a year, the participants gave public authorities a series of concrete proposals in December 2020. It is now time to start putting words into action!

The proposals issued by the Estates General of Hepatitis B included content from a variety of stakeholders within society. Patients, nurses, the medical profession and social figures to name a few, all with the purpose and intention to raise awareness and better inform the public, health practitioners and political authorities to change the stigma that has for so long affected opinion of this disease which affects 135,000 people in France's general population. One of the proposals is to make each person with a chronic form of hepatitis B into an informed figure in the fight against hepatitis B and strengthen preventative medicine by combining screenings and prevention.

The fight against hepatitis B in France also occurs through concrete measures that need to be taken over the short term.

- **From now on, rapid diagnostic tests** detecting hepatitis B infections must be carried out to improve the screening of people who are the farthest removed from the healthcare system.

- **It is also urgent to include hepatitis B under the decree from December 22, 2016** related to protecting the confidentiality of acts and services for minors, so that they can be treated in complete confidentiality, like is the case for HIV and hepatitis C infections.

- **We need to organize "catch-up" hepatitis B vaccinations for children and adolescents up until the age of 15**, so that those born before the vaccination obligation for infants launched in 2018, do not become the forgotten hepatitis B generation. Lastly, "catch-up" hepatitis B vaccinations for people most exposed to the disease should be reinforced as of 16 years old.

From now on, resolutely fighting against hepatitis B, will not only make it possible for France to meet the objective set by the WHO to eliminate hepatitis B between now and 2030, but enable tens of thousands of people with the disease to improve their quality of life.

ABOUT THE ESTATES GENERAL OF HEPATITIS B

The Estates General of Hepatitis B was officially launched in July 2019, at the initiative of the patients' organization "SOS Hépatites." Under the direction of a steering committee including approximately fifty experts from patient organizations, the medical-social world as well as medical and research institutions, they created an unprecedented initiative in health-related democracy, initiated by patients and civil society. The process, which took place over the course of a year, gave patients a platform, through three citizen panels and a survey conducted by a variety of partners among people living with hepatitis B.

PRESS CONTACTS

Pascal Mélin, President of the SOS hépatites Fédération, + 33 7 85 62 91 69

Carmen Hadey, SOS hépatites referent on "hepatitis B and vaccinations," + 33 7 83 71 57 68

Selly Sickout, Director of the SOS hépatites Fédération, + 33 6 74 86 44 48

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 **N° Vert 0 800 004 372**

Signatories of the summary report from the First Estates General of Hepatitis B

