



# Hepatitis C

Report 2025


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Tackling Hepatitis C in Pakistan:  
Indus Hospital & Health Network's  
Comprehensive Approach



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# Pakistan's Healthcare Emergency

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) represents a profound and escalating global health challenge, with transmission occurring primarily through blood-to-blood contact via contaminated medical equipment, inadequately screened blood products, and high-risk behaviours including injection drug use.

## Healthcare Disparity



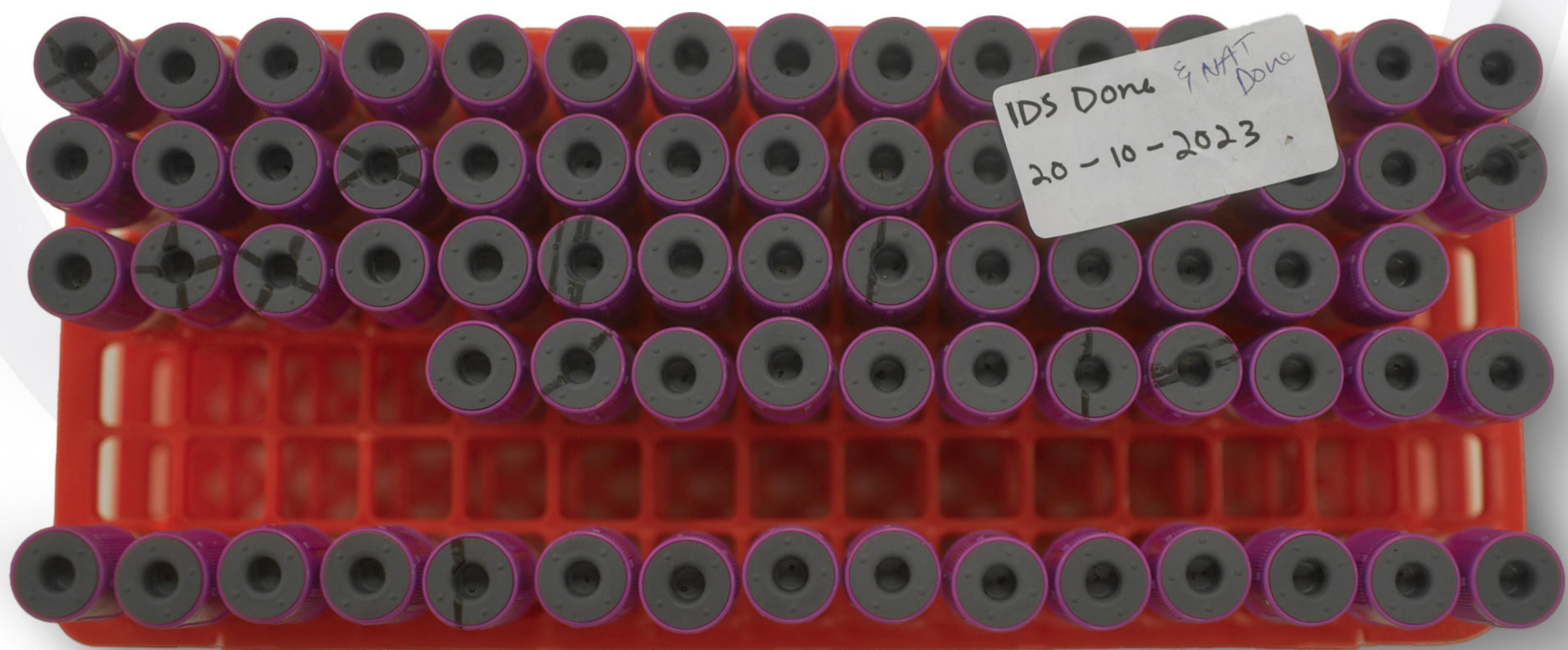
**50%**

of the population lacks access to basic healthcare services

## Did you know?

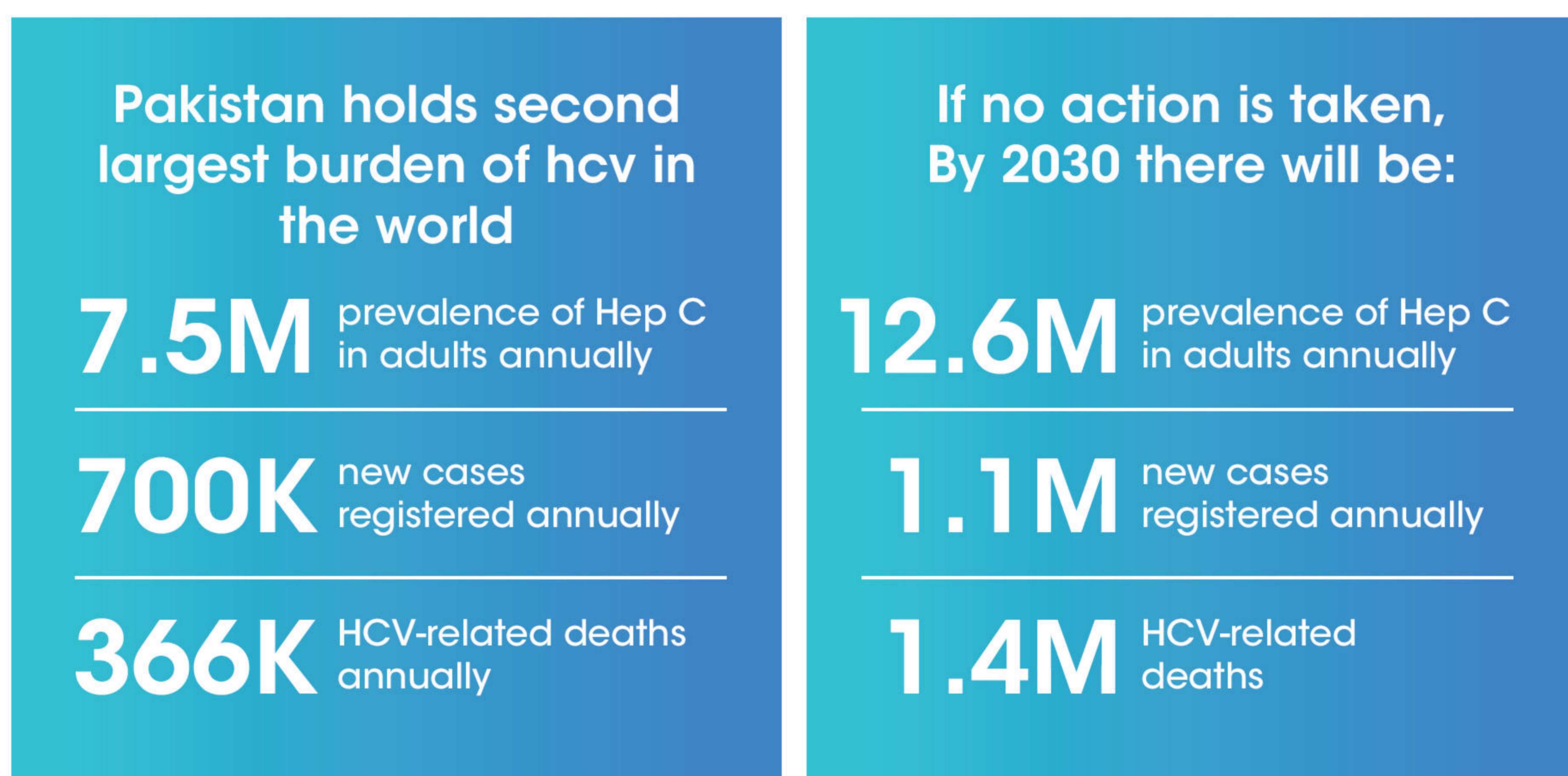
Pakistan's healthcare crisis is a complex issue with deep-rooted problems, with a major issue being the shortage of medical professionals. Many hospitals struggle to provide basic services due to budget constraints, leading to overcrowding, long wait times, poor patient care, and overpriced treatment. The situation is particularly dire in rural areas, where access to healthcare services is limited, and people often rely on traditional or unqualified practitioners.





HCV infections tend to progress to chronic infection. This progression often occurs insidiously, with patients remaining asymptomatic for decades while liver damage gradually accumulates. When symptoms do manifest, they typically include debilitating fatigue, cognitive impairment, and clinical depression, significantly diminishing quality of life and economic productivity.

## Hepatitis C: A National Crisis



Pakistan currently bears the second highest burden of Hepatitis C globally, constituting a genuine public health emergency that demands immediate attention. As of 2021, an alarming 9.7 million Pakistani citizens were living with active HCV infection, translating to a prevalence rate of 4.3%—nearly ten times higher than global averages. This represents not merely statistics, but millions of individuals and families facing potentially devastating health consequences.



The consequences of inaction are severe and irreversible. Without prompt intervention and treatment, chronic HCV infection inexorably progresses to hepatic fibrosis, cirrhosis, and hepatocellular carcinoma. These complications substantially increase mortality risk, with end-stage liver disease requiring costly interventions including transplantation—procedures largely inaccessible to most Pakistani patients. Furthermore, HCV-related complications place an overwhelming burden on an already strained healthcare system, diverting critical resources from other essential services.

# Modes of Transmission

In Pakistan, Hepatitis C virus transmission occurs primarily due to inadequate infection control practices.

The reuse of syringes and needles for medical injections represents a major transmission route, with Pakistan's high injection frequency creating multiple exposure opportunities. Improper sterilisation of medical and dental instruments further facilitates viral spread during procedures. Blood transfusion safety remains problematic, particularly in rural areas where screening protocols may be suboptimal.



**Unsafe Blood Transfusion**

**Unsterilised Surgical Equipment**



**Shared Razors and Blades**

**Reused Syringes and needles**



Traditional barbering services using shared razors create blood-to-blood transmission opportunities, especially during facial and head shaving that causes microabrasions. Body piercing performed with non-sterile equipment represent additional risk factors. Household transmission occurs through shared personal items that may contain microscopic blood contamination, such as razors or toothbrushes.

Currently, over

**12,540 patients**

patients are awaiting treatment at Indus Hospital & Health Network.

Addressing this crisis requires improved healthcare accessibility and widespread awareness campaigns to curb the spread and impact of Hepatitis C.

# Towards a Hepatitis-Free Future: IHHN's Hepatitis C Control Initiative

In response to Pakistan's urgent Hepatitis C crisis, the Indus Hospital & Health Network (IHHN) launched a dedicated initiative to tackle the growing burden of Hepatitis C in 2016. IHHN's programme is a critical step towards disease elimination. Through its hospitals and outreach centres, IHHN provides free-of-cost screening, diagnosis, and antiviral treatment for Hepatitis C.

The programme emphasises early detection and accessible care, particularly targeting underserved and high-risk communities.



# IHHN's Hepatitis C Clinic & Outreach Programme



Mass Screening



Pharmacy



Mental Health/Dietary Counseling



Laboratory



24/7 Toll-Free Number For HEP-C Information



Mobile App & Electronic Medical Record System

# Our Impact



**395,500+**

patients screened  
till April 2025

**18,500+**

treatments initiated  
since 2017

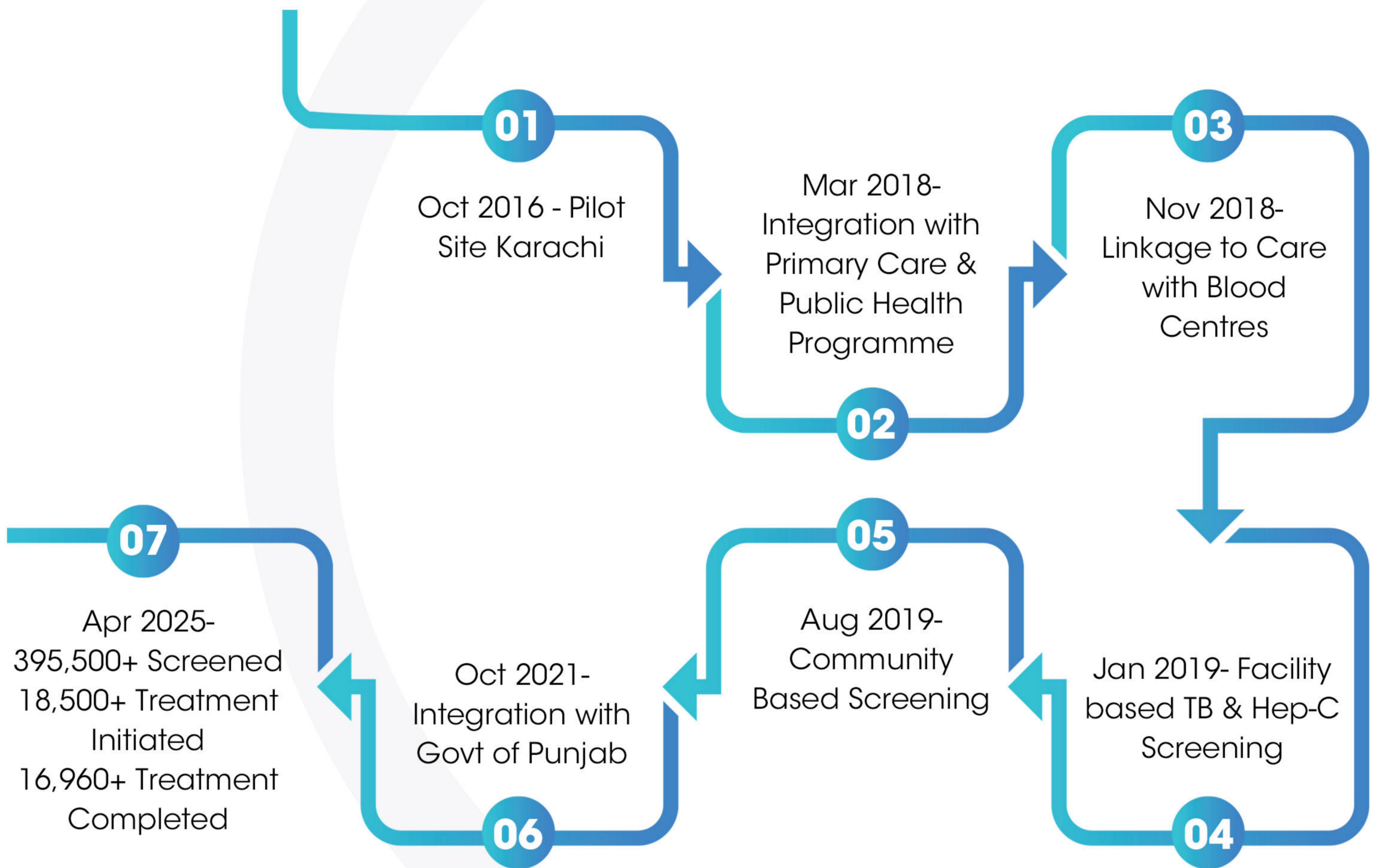
**16,960**

patients completed  
treatment

**97%**

patients completely  
cured

# Milestones



# Community Awareness

Community awareness represents a critical pillar in IHHN'S Hepatitis C elimination strategy, with implementations of comprehensive educational outreach across healthcare facilities nationwide. These structured awareness sessions equip vulnerable populations with essential knowledge regarding transmission pathways, prevention strategies, and the importance of early screening and treatment.

IHHN observes World Hepatitis Day each year on July 28th. Through these coordinated awareness efforts, IHHN addresses the knowledge gaps and misconceptions that often facilitate HCV transmission while simultaneously reducing stigma associated with the disease, ultimately working toward the vision of a Hepatitis C-free Pakistan.





## Patient Testimonial

Shamim Faiz, 44 years old,  
from Bhong, Southern Punjab.

"It started with a cough followed by headaches and fatigue. I did not pay too much heed to it, I had 6 young children and a husband to look after. But, soon my condition deteriorated so much so that even wrapping a dupatta (scarf) on my head was a struggle. My husband, who worked day and night at construction sites doing odd jobs, took me to the IHHN where I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C. I remember holding my husband's hand and saying 'I don't want the treatment.' "

Shamim assumed it would cost her more than 3 lakh rupees, which her family could not afford at all. At that moment, she felt like a liability. But when she asked the doctor, 'Is there any way we can pay it in installments?' she still very vividly remembered the relief she felt when she was told her entire treatment would be free.

"We didn't believe it, but they were true to their word. My treatment was absolutely free of cost. It is truly only because of them that I have survived this illness. Indus Hospital & Health Network is a blessing for poor people like us."



## Patient Testimonial

Muhammad Asif, 25 years old, from Sanjarpur, Sadiqabad.

Muhammad Asif came from a very underprivileged family. He didn't realise he was suffering from a serious illness until one day he felt extreme fatigue just after running a short distance. Although he brushed it off as weakness, it continued for two months, along with joint pain at night. With very little health facilities around, he could not afford the cost to travel within the city. A guest at his house advised him not to ignore his symptoms and told him about IHHN'S Bhong Campus. Following this advice, Muhammad Asif visited the facility.

Upon arrival, he was amazed by the quality and cleanliness. He was tested the same day and found to be positive for Hepatitis C, which cleared up confusions about his prior symptoms. His samples were sent for further testing, and within a few days, the hospital followed up with a call — something he didn't expect at all. He was deeply touched by them caring about his well-being and treatment.

He was then provided two months of free medication, during which he began feeling significantly better. At his final visit, a final test was conducted which showed he was free from the disease. Now fully recovered, Muhammad Asif was very grateful to IHHN and encouraged others to seek care there. He praised the entire staff, from the cleaners to the doctors, for their kindness and dedication. For him, IHHN is a blessing for the poor, and he is committed to recommending it to everyone in need and encouraging them to not ignore their symptoms.

## Citations

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