



## Harvard and MIT Students Rally Boston to Join Global Guinness World Record Attempt on World Hepatitis Day

July 27, 2012

### Team HBV Chapters in Boston and Quest Diagnostics Urge City Residents and Visitors to Come Out and Be Counted at 'See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil' Viral Hepatitis Awareness Event, Boston Common, Noon Tomorrow

BOSTON, July 27, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Students at Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology aren't the type to take the summer off. Those who comprise a group called Team HBV, while working well-earned and prized internships, are also dedicating their off hours to leading conference calls, sending emails and public service announcements, and distributing flyers in Chinatown and beyond -- all in an attempt to rally elected officials, community and healthcare leaders, and the general Boston population to join them, noon tomorrow, at Boston Common (Park and Tremont) for a creative approach to an important cause: a global Guinness World Record attempt on World Hepatitis Day.

July 28th is annual World Hepatitis Day, and this year, the World Hepatitis Alliance is calling on its international partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and Team HBV, to take part in a global, synchronized action within a 24-hour period. The event is both fun and serious, asking participants to perform one of three symbolic gestures: 'See No Evil' covering their eyes, 'Hear No Evil' covering their ears, or 'Speak No Evil' covering their mouths, to highlight that hepatitis B and C need greater attention and action around the world.

"We want Boston to be represented in this global fight," said David Yang, President, Team HBV Harvard. "The spread of viral hepatitis is not only an important public health issue, but it's an addressable one. In the case of hepatitis B, infection is preventable through vaccination."

Sasha Targ, Team HBV MIT President, added, "We want to help our community understand hepatitis B and that they can get vaccinated and protected, and we want them to take advantage of the free screenings we offer, thanks to our supporter, Quest Diagnostics. It's important to understand that testing is crucial, because if you know you are infected, there are treatments that can help and ways you can protect your loved ones from infection. For example, a mother with hepatitis B can protect her child at birth with proper medical treatment."

In the case of hepatitis C, Yang added, while an effective vaccine is not available, treatment is highly effective. "But in the case of both hepatitis B and C, you need to know enough to get tested and address it."

Hepatitis, a silent disease with no symptoms until it has done serious harm, is inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis B and C are leading causes of liver cancer worldwide. Worldwide, 350 million people have chronic hepatitis B and 170 million have chronic hepatitis C. Infectious diseases, hepatitis B and C can be transmitted sexually, from mother to child at birth, and from blood-to-blood contact.

"It is startling that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that, in the United States, 3.2 million people have chronic hepatitis C, and that as many as 2.2 million have chronic hepatitis B," said Dr. Salim Kabawat, Medical Director, Quest Diagnostics Cambridge laboratory. "Many aren't aware of the disease risks and so are not vaccinated. Many are unaware they're infected and pass it to others. The education work of the students of Team HBV impressed all of us at Quest Diagnostics so greatly because this is indeed a cause where awareness and education can make a difference in public health."

In 2010, Harvard students of Team HBV approached the Quest Diagnostics Cambridge laboratory for support in the initiative, specifically asking for discounted testing. When Dr. Kabawat listened to their cause and their plans for the Boston and Cambridge communities, he asked his company to donate the testing, which the company has been doing ever since. The resulting Team HBV activities in Boston earned the group status as Team HBV chapter of the year in 2011 and the honor of hosting in Boston the Team HBV annual national meeting that Fall. The Quest Diagnostics Cambridge laboratory, as its company builds its commitments as a corporate citizen in its communities around the country, has become a model for other regions.

Cambridge City Councillor Leland Cheung, also a longtime supporter of the student group said, "I'm proud to support Team HBV in their efforts to educate people about the severity of viral hepatitis infection. The key to stopping the spread of hepatitis in our local community is through education and awareness. I applaud and thank these students for working to make a difference in the health of our communities."

Across the United States, hepatitis B has notable prevalence among Asian Americans. Some countries do not vaccinate at birth, leaving some populations vulnerable to infection. Lack of awareness compounds the issue and leads to spread of the disease and progression of it to more serious ailments in patients. In Boston, Asians represent 10 percent of the total population yet account for more than 50 percent of new chronic hepatitis B cases. Roughly 25 percent of patients, if untreated, develop serious ailments like liver cancer. In Boston, the mortality rate among Asians from liver cancer is nearly three times the city-wide average.

"Our collaborative team -- which includes our Team HBV student volunteers, leaders from Quest Diagnostics, and MAP for Health -- has been working hard to plan this event, and we hope the Boston community will rally and come by at noon on Saturday, at Boston Common, get a free 'See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil' World Hepatitis Day t-shirt, and take a voucher for free testing." The team has gained the support of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, Thai Association of Boston, Cambridge and Boston City Councillors, media, and others.

Community members can take the voucher offered at the event to any Quest Diagnostics patient service center in the Boston area to receive free hepatitis B screening, or can come to a Team HBV screening and awareness event with free Quest Diagnostics hepatitis B testing, including the August 5th event at MAP for Health (322 Tremont Street, Boston). For more information about the Team HBV Boston World Hepatitis Day rally or its activities and screening events in the area, visit [TeamHBV.org/Boston](http://TeamHBV.org/Boston). To view a public service announcement, visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGJX0PKrzac>.

#### Team HBV at Harvard

Team HBV at Harvard was founded in 2008 and regularly holds events across Greater Boston to educate high-risk populations (focusing on Asian-Americans immigrants) about the disease's risks and preventability. In 2011-2012, these seminars reached about 200 individuals.

Team HBV at Harvard was recognized as the "Best Collegiate Chapter" for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 academic years by Stanford University's

Asian Liver Center, Team HBV's parent organization, and, with that honor, hosted the organization's national conference that year.

**Team HBV at MIT**

Team HBV at MIT was founded in 2011 and has created a variety of educational tools and videos, and hosted screening clinics and classes on the hepatitis. Team HBV MIT's activities are focused on outreach in the Cambridge, greater Boston and Chinatown areas. The organization was recognized this spring with the Bridge Builder Award by the MIT Student Activities Office, given to a student leader for a campaign, initiative, or program that has addressed a campus, local community, or global need.

**About Quest Diagnostics**

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