

Launch of the Viral Hepatitis in sub-Saharan Africa ECHO program

The “Viral Hepatitis in sub-Saharan Africa” ECHO program was launched on 23 May 2019 from the Liver Unit at the University of Cape Town and Groote Schuur Hospital. This is a supranational model involving five countries:

- **South Africa:** Professors Wendy Spearman and Mark Sonderup
- **Nigeria:** The University of Lagos, Lagos led by Prof Funmi Lesi
- **Ghana:** Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi led by Prof Mary Afihene
- **Ethiopia:** Addis Ababa University Medical School led by Prof Abate Shewaye
- **United Kingdom:** UCL Institute of Liver and Digestive Disease and Kings College Hospital. Active support and ongoing guidance from Prof Geoff Dusheiko

This program will encourage secondary level hospitals and community-based healthcare providers to participate in sub-Saharan Africa’s first viral hepatitis ECHO program to expedite delivery of appropriate treatment for Hepatitis B and C. The Liver Unit at the University of Cape Town and Groote Schuur Hospital will initially function as the Hub with the centres in Nigeria, Ghana and Ethiopia becoming their own Hubs over the next 6-12 months and developing their own spokes thereby rapidly increasing access to care for viral hepatitis within their regions. Within South Africa, we plan initially to set up spokes at the secondary level hospitals in George, Port Elizabeth and East London where we already have well established patient referral pathways. Over time, this would be expanded to include other spokes at more hospitals throughout South Africa.

We look forward to actively interacting with healthcare providers across Sub-Saharan Africa and thereby improving linkage to care for hepatitis B and C.

