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Singapore: Bristol-Myers-Squibb Foundation has released nine new grants totaling to around \$3.5 million towards hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) in India and China.

The new grants align with the World Health Organization's (WHO) strategies for reducing the incidence of HBV and HCV infection through early diagnosis and screening of high-risk populations, including intravenous drug users and patients co-infected with HIV and/or tuberculosis. Several focus on increasing awareness about disease transmission among health care providers who care for HBV- and HCV-infected patients, who also are considered at-risk for contracting viral hepatitis.

Viral hepatitis is an urgent public health issue in Asia. In China and India together, it is estimated that more than 123 million people are infected with chronic hepatitis B and about 60 million with hepatitis C. Although progress has been made in introducing national policies to control the spread of HBV and HCV, community and general awareness is considerably low. When left untreated, viral hepatitis infections result in liver failure and chronic liver disease that can create a significant burden on families and society.