WHO Adds New Hepatitis C Drugs to Essential Medicines List

May 12, 2015

The World Health Organization (WHO) has added five hepatitis C virus (HCV) drugs to its essential medicines list in an attempt to improve access to the expensive new treatments across the globe, according to a WHO press release.

Inclusion on the list, which the WHO considers “the minimum medicine needs for a basic health care system,” indicates to government regulators and drug companies that the medicines need to be made available at lower prices to poor countries, “to ensure that everyone who needs them can obtain them.”

Specifically, the WHO added sofosbuvir (brand name Sovaldi) to the guide, as well as simeprevir (Olysio), daclatasvir, ribavirin and the non-nucleoside polymerase inhibitor dasabuvir. Gilead’s combo drug Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir) was put on the WHO’s “complementary list” for suggested HCV treatment.

The WHO also added 16 new cancer drugs to its 2015 essential medicines list, as well as four new antibiotics designed to treat drug-resistant tuberculosis.