

Hepatitis B Foundation
Princeton Workshop
Cure Agenda
May 2-3, 2013
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

The message from the 30 participants at the Hepatitis B Foundation's 2013 Princeton Workshop was loud and clear: we need a cure for hepatitis B! The two-day workshop was held May 2-3 at the Foundation's research center in Bucks County, Pa. Established in 1995, it continues to be the only meeting where the nation's thought leaders from government, industry, and the nonprofit/academic sectors gather for high-level, roundtable discussions about hepatitis B and liver cancer.

The question "Is a cure for hepatitis B needed?" was addressed by Dr. Raymond Schinazi, who made a strong argument that the next drugs should not be incremental in value because we already have good medical means of managing chronic hepatitis B.

While the group agreed, it then wrestled with the question of how to define a cure, since nothing is ever easy with HBV. After vigorous discussions, they accepted HBF president Dr. Timothy Block's definition of a cure as "Returning an individual to a risk of liver disease similar to that of an individual with a resolved infection." (And the individual should remain medication-free after reaching this clinical state.)

A cure will almost certainly involve strategies that suppress viremia and antigenemia and activate an innate or adaptive immune response. The group also agreed that there is an increasing need for "response guided therapies" as more drugs with different mechanisms of action become available. Each drug would be started or stopped as and when needed. This would help manage drug resistance and changing clinical profiles, allowing different drugs to be used at times when they are most likely to be beneficial.

Although the newer, non-polymerase drugs that suppress viremia are very important, methods that suppress antigenemia or activate immune responses, such as the toll receptor agonists, cccDNA repressors and sAg suppressors, generated the most excitement.

So the race is on with renewed enthusiasm. The recent success in "curing" hepatitis C makes us all the more passionate and confident that a cure for hepatitis B is needed ... and possible.



Princeton Workshop 2013 participants met at the Hepatitis B Foundation headquarters in Bucks County, PA. *Standing L to Right from the bottom of stairs to the top: A Cuconati, M Sofia, S Fletcher, KM Chang, WT London, T Block, A Vaillant, M Bray, A Ford-Hutchinson, L Flores, J Liang, A Mehta, D Berard, S. Ludmerer, S Menne, J Wu, JT Guo, R Schinazi, R Koshy, R Purcell, Tenney, HT Guo, R Gish, G Fanning, C Seeger, B McMahon, J Hu, J, Tavis, L. Chiang, L Tyrrell, M Levrero (May 2-3, 2013).*