The Secretary  
19th Expert Committee on the Selection and  
Use of Essential Medicines Medicine Access and Rational Use (MAR)  
World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, CH-1211 Geneva27  
Switzerland  

Dear Sir/Madam,

Vietnam Network of People living with HIV (VNP+) strongly supports the application made by MSF/Médecins Sans Frontières to include Pegylated Interferon 2a and 2b in the List of Essential Medicines of World Health Organisation (WHO).

As has been documented and reported, the HIV epidemic in Vietnam is driven by injecting drug use. The connection between HIV and HCV and co-infection of the same among people who inject drugs is already also well documented.

The crisis that hepatitis C virus (HCV) poses to Vietnam is enourmous. Recent studies involving expertise from WHO has indicated that HCV prevalence among general population ranged from 0.38% to 4.3%. Among people who inject drugs in Vietnam this has a range of 31% to 97.2%.

Further among people living with HIV who has a drug use background, it is reported to be as high as 98.5%. Unfortunately, given the complexities around HCV treatment, cost of the medication and being a resource limited country, the public health program of Vietnam so far does not include a treatment program for hepatitis C.

Given the current cost of Pegylated interferon many individuals who have been advised by doctors to initiate treatment based on clinical profiles are not being able to do so. They are either not being able to afford the treatment or choosing to treat with medicines which are no longer perceived as standard of care. In reality, many people living with HIV are dying of HCV related complications than HIV related complications -which probably are all undocumented.

We hope that listing Pegylated Interferon alpha 2a and 2b in the WHO’s Essential Medicine List will allow and support our Government to improve access to hepatitis C treatment and at the same time assist WHO in moving forward to ensure quality validation of bio-similar pegylated interferon to improve access.

Vietnam Network of People living with HIV (VNP+) strongly supports and wishes the application a success.

With Best wishes,

(Do Dang Dong)  
Chairman, VNP+

2 ibid
3 ibid