

Prevalence of HBV Infection in Health Care Personnel

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Health care workers are considered at a higher risk of acquiring hepatitis B infection because of their greater exposure to blood and other body fluids¹. This study was conducted to determine the prevalence of HBV exposure in sub-groups of health care workers.

Subjects, Methods and Results

HBsAg was tested in 145 doctors, 41 dentists, 20 paramedics and 35 sweepers of Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre. HBsAg and anti-HBs were assayed using Auszyme and AUSAB (Elisa, Abbott Laboratories, Chicago) respectively. Ten (7%) doctors, 7 (17%) dentists, 1 (5%) paramedic and 7(20%) sweepers were HBsAg positive. HBs anti-bodies were tested in 88 doctors and 20 paramedics. Twenty-seven (31%) doctors and 7(35%) paramedics showed antibodies to hepatitis B virus.

Comments

Healthcare workers have always been considered at a higher risk for acquiring hepatitis B infection, but 20% prevalence in sweepers, 17% in dentists and 7% in doctors is very alarming. It shows either total ignorance of healthcare workers with regards to HBV infection or their non-adherence to the universal safety procedures. This study highlights the immediate need for education and training of healthcare workers, particularly sweepers and dentists in universal safety procedures. Hepatitis B vaccination for all susceptible healthcare workers and use of a passive immunization following acute exposure to the infection is suggested^{2,3}.

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