

ABSTRACT

STUDY OF AN EPIDEMIC OF HEPATITIS - A

Y.K. Joshi - B.N. Tandon - B.M. Gandhi

RAJGARHIA LIVER RESEARCH UNIT

DEPARTMENT OF GASTROENTEROLOGY, AIIMS, NEW DELHI

Viral hepatitis is an endemic disease in India and outbreaks in epidemic forms are quite common. Virus A infection has been suggested as the etiological agent for most of the epidemics hepatitis. Water borne infection ^{is} commonest. However recent reports have established that several water borne epidemic of viral hepatitis in India were due to non-A, non-B infection. There is no report of confirmed virus A epidemic hepatitis from our country. [An epidemic of hepatitis in a primary school in Kerala is reported in this paper. Which was proved to be due to virus A infection. The source of infection was well water. 345 of 778 children and 14 of 55 teachers had clinically apparent illness. The onset of the illness was acute and prodromal phase was short. The clinical course was mild and there was no mortality. All the patients improved within four weeks. The epidemic subsided within six weeks. Blood samples collected from patients during recovery and convalescent phases and from controls were tested for IgM anti-HAV and total serum IgM. 85% children and 78% adult patients were positive for IgM anti-HAV, and total IgM was elevated significantly in all of them. None of the controls was positive for IgM anti-HAV and all had normal serum IgM levels. These serological findings are diagnostic for virus A infection. This is the first etiologically proved hepatitis A epidemic in India and its clinical and epidemiological features are noted to be quite characteristic.]