

# **Subclinical Hepatitis A in North Indian Children**

## **Abstract**

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## **Subclinical Hepatitis A in North Indian Children**

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## **Abstract**

More than 90% of the population of India is positive for IgG antibody against hepatitis A virus (HAVAb-G) which suggests a past infection by hepatitis A virus (HAV). Detailed history-taking, however, does not reveal clinical hepatitis in the past, and it has been assumed most individuals have had subclinical infection early in life. This hypothesis now can be tested. IgM anti-HAV (HAVAb-M; Abbott Laboratories) as a marker of acute or recent infection by HAV has been sought in 90 healthy children below the age of 10 years and in 60 adults aged 17-30. 25 (28%) of the children but none of the adults were positive for HAVAb-M. HAVAb-G was tested in sera from 17 of the IgM positive children: 6 had titres of 75 or more and 3 of these had titres of 2000. In the general population in our laboratory where HAVAb-G is positive titres of 75 or more are usual. Transaminase levels were two to three times normal in 3 of the 16 HAVAb-M positive children tested for these enzymes.

The presence of HAVAb-M and high titres of IgG antibody confirm that, in this part of north India, almost 30% of children below the age of 10 have subclinical acute virus A hepatitis. This group will be a continuing source for the spread of HAV infection in the community, and these findings also explain the high positivity rate for HAVAb-G in individuals over the age of 10 who have no history of a clinical attack of acute viral hepatitis.