

DELHI PROSTITUTES ARE NOT A HIGH RISK GROUP FOR
TRANSMITTING HBV-INFECTION

Sir,

Maternal to infant transmission and sexual contacts are the two among the major modes of hepatitis-B-virus(HBV) transmission in normal population. One of the recent studies from India¹ has reported maternal to infant mode to account for only one third of the total HBV-transmission. However, very little information is available on the role of heterosexual contact in spreading HBV-infection in India. Prostitutes are assumed to carry a major risk factor for transmitting HBV-infection to the healthy clients. Till now, no detailed study was performed to evaluate the HBV-status of Indian prostitutes in reference to their role in transmitting this infection to the others. Present study describes the serological status of HBV-makers in prostitutes and their contribution in the overall prevalence of HBV-infection in India. A total number of 635 sera samples from professional prostitutes operating in the Red Light area of Delhi and in the age group of 18-40 years were screened for HBsAg. HBsAg positive sera were further tested for HBeAg, a marker of active HBV-replication. 203 of total 635 sera were also analysed for anti HBS. All these tests were performed by using EIA- kits from Abbotts(USA). The

results of this study showed the presence of HBsAg in 23 of 635 (3.6%), HBeAg in 8 of 23 HBsAg seropositive (34.7%) and anti-HBs in 203(18.7%) prostitutes. All prostitutes had normal liver function tests and were free of any clinical symptoms of liver disease. A comparison of HBV-markers in prostitutes with those in normal population^{2,3} shows no significant difference. This indicates that prostitutes as such may not pose any additional danger of transmitting HBV-infection in Delhi.

Clinical Immunology
Section of Deptt. of
Medicine and Deptt. of
Gastroenterology
and Human Nutrition Unit
ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF
MEDICAL SCIENCES,
New Delhi (INDIA)

Yadu Nath Singh

M Irshad

B M Gandhi

Sanjay D Khare

A N Malaviya

B N Tandon

References:

1. Nayak NC, Panda SK, Zuckerman AJ et al. Dynamics and Impact of perinatal transmission of hepatitis B virus in north India. J Med Virol 1987;21:137-145.
2. Tandon BN, Joshi YK, Gandhi BM, Irshad M et al. Epidemiology of HBsAg carriers in India, A holistic approach to control of hepatitis B reservoir. J Gastroenterol Hepatol 1986; 1: 39-43.
3. Tandon BN, Gandhi BM, Joshi YK. Etiological spectrum of viral hepatitis and prevalence of markers of hepatitis A and B virus infection in north India. WHO Bulletin 1984; 62:67-73.