

Declining hepatitis A seroprevalence: a global review and analysis

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Abstract

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is spread by faecal-oral contact or ingestion of contaminated food or water. Lifelong immunity is conferred by infection or vaccination, so anti-HAV seroprevalence studies can be used to indicate which populations are susceptible to infection. Seroprevalence rates are highly correlated with socioeconomic status and access to clean water and sanitation. Increasing household income, education, water quality and quantity, sanitation, and hygiene leads to decreases in HAV prevalence. Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and most European nations have low anti-HAV rates. Although anti-HAV rates remain high in most Latin American, Asian, and Middle Eastern nations, average seroprevalence rates are declining. Surveys from Africa generally indicate no significant decline in anti-HAV rates. Because the severity of illness increases with age, populations with a high proportion of susceptible adults should consider targeted vaccination programmes.

Reference

Gandhi BM, Joshi YK, Tandon BN, 1981. Prevalence of virus A exposure and viral hepatitis A in India. *Lancet* ii: 374.