

## **Acute viral hepatitis: Etiological spectrum in children in North India**

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### **Acute viral hepatitis: Etiological spectrum in children in North India**

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Though viral hepatitis is a global problem, it is more alarming in developing and tropical countries where the infection is widely prevalent in both sporadic and epidemic forms. The exact incidence is not known in most of these countries including India, as it is not a reportable disease everywhere. Two types of hepatitis-infectious and serum-now known as hepatitis A and hepatitis B-caused by two different agents.had been recognised as early as in 1940<sup>1</sup> Now after establishing serodiagnostic tests for hepatitis A and B, it has been confirmed that there is a third type of acute viral hepatitis (AVH) that is not related to hepatitis A and B viruses (HAV & HBV) or other viruses like CMV and EBV known to cause hepatitis. As this third one is diagnosed only by exclusion of the known agents, and possibility of more than one agent cannot be ruled out, this hepatitis is called temporarily as non-A, non-B (NANB) hepatitis. In most of the developed countries and some of the tropical countries, prevalence of HAV and HBV infection in adult population is well established, mainly on the basis of hospital and a few community surveys. It has been shown that prevalence and incidence of both these hepatitis are directly related to hygiene, sanitation economic status and education standards of a community. <sup>2</sup> HAV infection is less common among "adults, in tropical countries, while in developed (western) countries it is a disease of adults. In tropical areas the situation is just reverse, hepatitis A is the disease of childhood, where majority (90%) of the children by age of 12 yr suffer from it and acquire immunity as has been confirmed by the presence of the antibody (anti-HAV) to this virus. <sup>3</sup> In western countries the prevalence of HAV and HBV infection is high among the children staying in close communities like mentally retarded schools, however in general population both these are quite uncommon. The incidence of acute hepatitis B in adults is comparable in most of the countries (30 to 60%) except in a few like Greece, <sup>4</sup> where it is around 80 percent. HBV infection is less common in pediatric age group. There are no reports regarding the NANB infection in pediatric population, but it is presumed that in developed countries where the NANB infection accounts for 15 to 30 percent of the sporadic cases in adults, perhaps half of that may be prevalent in children. <sup>5</sup>

## References

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