

Etiological spectrum of viral hepatitis and prevalence of markers of hepatitis A and B virus infection in north India*

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Etiological spectrum of viral hepatitis and prevalence of markers of hepatitis A and B virus infection in north India*

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Abstract

The etiological spectrum of viral hepatitis and the prevalence of serological markers of hepatitis A and B virus infection in healthy persons in north India were studied. Hepatitis A virus was found to be the most common cause of acute hepatitis in children (67%). It was a less frequent cause of this disease in adults (14%). Hepatitis A virus was only rarely the cause of acute (12%) and subacute (4%) liver failure. It was recorded as the etiological agent in an epidemic among schoolchildren. Exposure to hepatitis A virus occurs in early childhood, and by the age of 10 years, 90% of healthy persons have serological evidence of hepatitis A virus infection.

Hepatitis non-A non-B virus was the cause of acute hepatitis in 44% of adults and 24% of children with this disease. This virus was also the most important etiological agent in acute liver failure (55%) and subacute hepatic failure (51%). It was the cause of all the hepatitis epidemics in the general population.

Only 9% of hepatitis cases in children were due to hepatitis B virus whereas 42% of cases in adults were attributable to this virus. Hepatitis B virus was the causative agent in 33% of cases of acute hepatic failure and 45% of cases of subacute hepatic failure. The carrier rate for hepatitis B virus was 5% and antibody to hepatitis B surface antigen was found in up to 38% of specific population groups.

Reference

Tandon BN, Gandhi BM, Joshi YK, Gupta H, Irshad M. (1984). Subclinical hepatitis A in north Indian children. *The Lancet*, 11, 335 - 336