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Vaccination against hepatitis A virus may not be required for schoolchildren in northern India: results of a seroepidemiological survey

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Abstract

Objectives: To evaluate the current seroprevalence of antibodies against hepatitis A virus (HAV) in a sample of schoolchildren above 10 years of age and to determine the prevalence of HAV-induced hepatitis in adults at a tertiary care hospital in northern India between January 1992 and December 2000.

Methods: Sera from 276 male and 224 female schoolchildren aged 10–17 years were tested for anti-HAV antibodies by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay. Consecutive patients with a diagnosis of acute viral hepatitis who attended a liver clinic were tested for the serological markers of HAV, hepatitis B Virus, hepatitis C virus, hepatitis D virus, and hepatitis E virus.

Findings: Of the male and female children, 96.3% and 98.2%, respectively had anti-HAV antibodies in their sera. The prevalence of these antibodies in the age groups 10–12, 13–14, and 15–17 years were 98.6%, 94.8%, and 98.3% respectively. The frequency of HAV-induced acute viral hepatitis (69/870, 8%) in adults did not show an increasing trend.

Conclusion: Mass HAV vaccination may be unnecessary in northern India because the seroprevalence of protective antibodies against HAV in schoolchildren aged over 10 years remains above 95% and there has been no apparent increase in HAV-induced acute viral hepatitis in adults.

Keywords: Hepatovirus/immunology; Hepatitis antibodies/immunology; Hepatitis B surface antigens; Hepatitis, Viral, Human/ virology; Child; Adult; Seroepidemiologic studies; India (*source: MeSH, NLM*).

Mots clés: Virus hépatite A/immunologie; Anticorps antiviral hépatite/immunologie; Antigène HBS; Hépatite virale humaine/ virologie; Enfant; Adulte; Etude séro-épidémiologique; Inde (*source: MeSH, INSERM*).

Palabras clave: Hepatovirus/inmunología; Anticuerpos antihepatitis/inmunología; Antígenos de superficie de la hepatitis B; Hepatitis viral humana/virología; Niño; Adulto; Estudios seroepidemiológicos; India (*fuentes: DeCS, BIREME*).

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