

Viral hepatitis - is it still a challenge in the Indian subcontinent?

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Abstract

Viral hepatitis continues to be a major public health problem in India. Ever since the first epidemics of hepatitis that had occurred in 1955 at Delhi, several epidemic outbreaks of hepatitis have continued to occur (1-8). It is important to point out that HEV infection is responsible for most of these epidemics (1-7,9-16). But recently outbreaks of hepatitis A have been also reported from the country. Yet, it is interesting to point out that HEV infection is responsible for 30-70 per cent of the cases of acute sporadic hepatitis and is the major cause of acute liver failure (ALF) (17-21). In paediatric population, hepatitis A is the predominant aetiological agent for the cases of viral hepatitis (8,22-25). However, dual infections with HAV and HEV have been reported amongst the children with ALF (26). Hepatitis B accounts for 15-30 per cent of the cases of acute hepatitis seen in India (20-27), while HCV is an infrequent cause of acute icteric hepatitis (28,29) though it is responsible for most of the cases of post-transfusion hepatitis. Hepatitis D virus (HDV) infection is reported to be in less than 10 per cent of patients with acute or chronic HBV infection (30).

References

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