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Acute sporadic viral hepatitis in urban population of a tribal district in Madhya Pradesh

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Objective: To estimate the incidence of acute sporadic viral hepatitis and describe its epidemiology in an urban population. Design: A retrospective community survey for jaundice cases. Setting: Headquarter town of a tribal district, Bastar, in Madhya Pradesh state, India. Method: Trained paramedics surveyed about 51,643 population to detect cases of jaundice which occurred in the past one year. Cases were examined to collect clinical and epidemiological data. Blood samples were drawn from all cases who had jaundice in the past 3 months for testing them for markers of viral hepatitis. Results: Study estimated the annual incidence of jaundice cases as 244 (95% CI201-287) per 100,000 population. Almost 95% jaundice cases occurred in summer and monsoon months. People from all socio-economic strata were affected. The incidence of jaundice was found to be the highest in children below 15 years of age (3.7 per 1000) which declined significantly with the increase in age (p=0.0000). The overall incidence in two sexes was not different statistically (p=0.7). Of 57 cases who had jaundice in the past 3 months, 19 (33%) were confirmed as having viral hepatitis. Hepatitis A and E combined together contributed 68% (13/19) of acute sporadic cases of viral hepatitis, whereas hepatitis B, C and D accounted for the remaining 32% of the cases. Conclusion: The study found the annual incidence of laboratory supported cases of viral hepatitis to be 81 (95% CI 57-106) per 100,000 population, which suggests that it is an important public health problem in India. Hepatitis A was much more prevalent than hepatitis E. Etiology of almost two-thirds of jaundice cases could not be established which require further community studies

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