

Hepatitis B Prevalence in Institutionalized Intellectually Disabled Children

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Abstract : Introduction: Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection causes chronic infection in human population, with high mortality. Some people are more susceptible to this infection. One of the high risk communities is mentally retarded children, who are institutionalized. Special conditions in these centers predispose children for HBV infection and transmission to healthy people. In this study our objective was to determine the prevalence of HBV infection among institutionalized mentally retarded children and study its associated risk factors. Materials and methods: In this study, 250 mentally retarded children (younger than 14 years old) were included. They were living in 5 nursing institutions, located in different parts of Tehran. HBsAg was measured in the sera of these patients by ELISA method. Results: Among 250 children, 20 children (8%) were HBsAg positive. HBV infection in girls was more than boys (11% to 5.6%). Among the types of mental retardation, children with cerebral palsy had the highest positive result for HBsAg. The most HBV infection (28.5%) was seen in children with longest duration of being institutionalized (10 to 11 years). Vaccinated children were more HBsAg positive (8.7%) than non-vaccinated children (5.3%). However, no significant relationship was observed between any of these factors and HBsAg positivity. Conclusion: Despite improvement of people's health condition and implementation of HBV vaccination, the prevalence of HBV infection is high in institutionalized mentally retarded children, which highlights the need for active measures to reduce this infection among this high risk population.

Keywords : hepatitis B virus, HBV vaccine, intellectually disabled children, mentally retarded

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