

Improvement of the Knowledge of the Primary Health Service Doctors in Albania about Pre and Post Exposure to Hepatitis B Virus

Ada Myrto

Neo Style Clinic, Albania

Introduction: Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver and can cause both chronic and acute illness. The virus is most frequently transmitted during labor and delivery from mother to infant, as well as by contact with blood or other body fluids. WHO reports that 257 million people were living with chronic hepatitis B (defined as positive hepatitis B surface antigen) infection in 2015. Hepatitis B resulted in an estimated 887 000 deaths in 2015, mostly from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma (i.e. primary liver cancer). As of 2016, 27 million people were aware of their illness (10.5 percent of all people reported to be living with hepatitis B), while 4.5 million (16.7 percent) of those infected were on medication. Vaccines which are safe, affordable, and effective can prevent hepatitis B.

Hepatitis B is a potentially life-threatening infection of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). It's a major global health problem. This can cause chronic infection and presents a high risk of death from cirrhosis and liver cancer in humans. A safe and effective vaccine that provides 98-100 percent protection against hepatitis B is available. Preventing hepatitis B infection prevents the development of complications, including chronic disease and liver cancer.

The endemicity of HBV infection varies widely throughout the world and is mainly influenced by the age at which the infection occurs. In Europe, the level of endemicity is increasing from the north to the south and from the west to the east. Most countries in northern and western Europe have a very low prevalence of HBV infection. In many parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union countries, the prevalence of hepatitis B transport was unexpectedly high. Infection endemicity is considered to be high in those parts of the world where at least 8 per cent of the population is HBsAg positive.

Credible epidemiological data on HBV infection in Albania, prior to the introduction of compulsory vaccination of newborn children against HBV (1995), were obtained by screening Albanian refugees during the first mass migration from Albania to Italy and Greece in 1991. Although refugees were mostly subjects of lower socio-economic classes, a large number of people enrolled in different geographic areas (rural and urban) provided important information on HBV infection in Albania.

The virus is transmitted through exposure to infectious blood or body fluids. Infection around the time of birth or from contact with other people's blood during childhood is the most common method of getting hepatitis B in areas where the disease is common. In areas where the disease is rare, intravenous drug use and sexual intercourse are the most common pathways of infection. Other risk factors include working in health care, blood transfusions, dialysis, living with an infected person, travelling

to countries where the rate of infection is high and living in an institution. Tattooing and acupuncture resulted in a significant number of cases in the 1980s; however, this has become less common with improved sterilization. Hepatitis B viruses cannot be spread by holding hands, sharing food, kissing, hugging, coughing, sneezing, or breast-feeding. The infection can be diagnosed by 1 or 2 months after exposure. Diagnosis is usually confirmed by blood tests for parts of the virus and antibodies to the virus.

Monitoring of Acute Viral Hepatitis in Albania:

Major Disease-Based Surveillance System, an individual case report for acute viral hepatitis A, B and C, established in 2013. Syndromic Surveillance System ALERT Weekly mandatory reporting of "Jaundice". Bio monitoring of infectious agents among individuals receiving multiple transfusions. Bio-BSS – Biological Behaviour Monitoring Study, 2005, 2008, 2011. Sentinel supervision of IDU, MSM and Roma.

Symptoms:

In many cases, the infection is asymptomatic people do not have symptoms. Those with symptoms usually get sick 30 days to 6 months after exposure to the virus. Symptoms include tiredness, malaise, nausea, abdominal pain, dark urine, and jaundice. The disease may last for several weeks, and some adults may become chronic carriers after they have been infected. Hepatitis B can cause chronic liver infections, liver cirrhosis, or liver cancer. Most infections are asymptomatic in children under the age of five, but can become chronic carriers. Many countries now include vaccination against Hepatitis B in their childhood vaccination schedules. Treatment includes supportive care for symptoms. Some cases of chronic hepatitis B may be treated with antiviral drugs.

Vaccination strategy after 2010 and Vaccination:

Obligatory Vaccination at birth and infants. Compulsory vaccination of adolescents. Mopping up campaigns for all adolescents and young people (University students) across the country (85% national coverage). Mandatory vaccination of health care workers and all health science students. Vaccination free of charge of the Roma population and MSM and other vulnerable groups in the vicinity of GP practices. Mandatory vaccination of anyone undergoing dialysis and major interventions.

Vaccination with Hepatitis B is routine immunization. If you have not been vaccinated, it is recommended that travellers on health care work assignments, such as doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, dentists, or those working in close contact with the local population, such as teachers, aid workers and missionaries, be advised. Two inactivated vaccines are available in Canada

and the United States, including the combined Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B vaccines. Both types of vaccines provide long-term protection and can be administered in accelerated schedules. Discuss your options with your healthcare provider if you cannot finish the series before you leave.

Primary health service doctors in Albania about pre and post exposure to Hepatitis B virus:

Albania is a small and Mediterranean country inhabited of 3 million of people. One half of the population lives in urban areas while the other part is spread out in agricultural settings and mountain villages. Viral hepatitis B is a cause of high morbidity among Albanian population. The morbidity rate is higher in children and adolescents than in adults. One half of all reported cases of viral jaundice are caused by hepatitis B virus infection (HBV). Hepatitis

B virus infection is the most easily transmitted blood-borne pathogen. Despite the fact that infection is preventable through vaccination and post –exposure immunoglobulin therapy, many people are unaware of the risk of HBV infection and appropriate preventive measures and also managing of the situation after exposure in the different environments like in family and further. This review focuses on the improvement of the attitude and knowledge of primary care doctors to HBV infection as they have the first approach with the patient especially in areas where the access to the hepatologist and infectionist doctors is difficult to obtain.

Conclusion:

Strengthening the capacities of public health laboratories. Improve sentinel surveillance in the most vulnerable groups.