

HB_sAg IN DONORS, PATIENTS, LABORATORY PERSONNEL AND HOUSESTAFF OF A MILITARY HOSPITAL IN IRAQ: A SEROEPIDEMIOLOGIC STUDY. E. Kassira, S. Karim and A. Hossaini, University of Baghdad Medical College, Baghdad, Iraq and the Medical College of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia USA

This study is an evaluation of the magnitude of the problem of hepatitis in the Iraqi army using a seroepidemiological investigation conducted in Al-Rashid Military Hospital. Four hundred and fourteen blood samples were obtained from patients with acute viral hepatitis, blood donors, hospital, laboratory staff and of family contacts of carriers were tested for HB_sAg by the CIEP and HA technics. In addition, a questionnaire (relating to the epidemiological behavior of the disease) was filled in for each individual following a direct interview. The HB_sAg incidence was 3.5% among volunteer blood donors, 4% among military unit contacts of carriers, 20% among wives of carriers, 8% of other members of the family, 8% of laboratory staff, 7% of the operating theater staff, 6.5% of surgical ward staff, 21.5% of patients in the dialysis unit and 8% of its staff. No statistically significant difference in incidence was found in relation to age, blood groups and urban or rural living. Most carriers showed normal transaminase and serum protein levels. Of patients with acute hepatitis, 50% showed detectable antigen when samples were collected during the first week of jaundice and 30% when sera were collected and examined 4-6 wks. following onset of jaundice. The antigen disappeared in 95% of these cases within 3 months. In conclusion, this study provides statistical evidence for the importance of the degree of contact with carriers or with blood products in the transmission and prevalence of viral hepatitis.

OBSERVATIONS ON A CHANGE FROM "ALTRUISTIC" TO "ASSURANCE" BLOOD DONORS. F. S. Morrison and L. Lotz, Mississippi Regional Blood Center and University of Mississippi School of Medicine, Jackson, MS. USA.

Differences in positive Hepatitis testing results have been noted in different blood donor populations. A recent change in our policy for blood donors provided an opportunity to relate hepatitis antigen results to motivation. A blood center previously used donors whose only motivation was the opportunity to give blood for the community where it was needed ("altruistic"). The center then changed to an approach which provides an insurance policy to each volunteer covering all his blood costs in the ensuing year ("assurance"). Certain changes in results of blood testing have become apparent. In the four month period preceding the policy change, 3,364 usable units were drawn at the center. Of these units, six were rejected in the laboratory because of a positive STS (0.178%) and seven were positive by RIA for HB_sAg (0.208%). After the publically announced change in policy, 3,084 usable units were drawn in the ensuing four months. From this donor pool, 18 units were rejected for positive STS (0.58%) and 16 for a positive test for HB_sAg (0.518%). These changes represent a statistically significant difference in the incidence of positive serologies for syphilis and for hepatitis, in the donor populations. We suggest that the motivation of blood donors may be influenced by the type of compensation offered and that an all-volunteer blood procurement program appears the safest course.

HB_s AND "e" ANTIGEN-ANTIBODY SYSTEMS IN A POPULATION OF HEMOPHILIACS. Mariani, G., Bottini, F.R., Mazzucconi, M.G. - Institute of Hematology. DeBac, C., Tallan, G. - Institute of Infectious Diseases, Rome, Italy.

In a population of 70 patients with congenital coagulation disorders, most of them hemophiliacs (61), HB_s antigen (Ag), HB_s antibody (Ab) as well as "e" Ag and Ab have been studied. These patients have been repeatedly exposed in the past to replacement therapy especially with commercial freeze-dried concentrates. Fourteen patients (20%) experienced jaundice in the past four years. HB_sAg was detected in 3 patients (4%) and HB_sAb in 47 (67%). "e"Ag was detected in 8 patients (11%) and "e"Ab in 7 (10%). All the "e"Ag-positive patients but one were HB_sAb-positive, although at a low titre. None of the "e"Ag-positive patients had raised serum-transaminases levels.

The clinical and prognostic significance of these hepatitis B-related humoral findings remains obscure.