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Prevalence of Hepatitis C Virus infection in Central-Ouest Tunisia: A population-based cross sectional study

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Introduction: Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a serious global public health issue. A significant number of patients infected with hepatitis C virus remain unaware of their infection, as this is a silent disease for many years. Patients are frequently detected at advance stages of the disease. The national prevalence of HCV is not known in Tunisia. Nearly all previous studies were carried out in selected group of people and found various rates. Adequate estimation of the prevalence of anti-hepatitis C virus and viremic population, not only among high-risk groups but also in the general population, is central to guide prioritization of scarce health care resources. The aim of this study was to estimate the prevalence of Hepatitis C Virus infection in a general population from the central-ouest of Tunisia.

Materials & Methods: A population based, cross sectional survey was carried out between January and June 2014 in the region of Thala (governorates of Kasserine) on a randomly selected sample of 4002 individuals, aged over 5 years. To evaluate the prevalence of HCV infection, all consent subjects were blood tested for detection of anti-HCV antibodies using Elisa Test.

Results: A total of 3,199 individuals were blood tested; 1274 (39.8%) were males and 1925 (60.2%) females. The median age was 29 years (Inter quartile range: 15- 45 years). Four subjects were not enrolled as we failed to confirm the serological diagnosis. The global prevalence of anti-HCV antibodies was 4.5% (95% CI: 3.8-5.3). The HCV positivity was significantly more among females than male's participants (5.4% vs. 3.1%) (OR=1.8; p=0.002). The mean age of HCV positive patients was significantly higher than the mean age of HCV negative patients (50.7 vs. 32.4 years) (P < 0.001).

Conclusion: The prevalence of anti-HCV antibodies was estimated to 5.4% in the general population of Thala. It is one of the highest rates in Tunisia. This information is useful for the allocation of resources in an effort to reduce the consequences of the disease.

Biography

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