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Viral hepatitis C serological and behavioral survey among single male laborers in Qatar

Hamad Eid Al Romaihi, Mohd Alhajri, Mohammed Hamad J Al Thani, Hanaa Al Masri, Elmoubasher Abu Baker Abd Farag, Ahmed Ismail, Nandakumar Ganesan, Sherine Shawky² and Naema Hassan Abdulla Al Molawi³

¹Ministry of Public Health, Qatar

²American University in Cairo, Egypt

³Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar

Hepatitis C viral infection is a public health concern worldwide and a major cause of morbidity and mortality in several countries that supply the State of Qatar with many of its laborers. The objectives were to measure the prevalence of hepatitis C viral infection among single male laborers; detect the practices that may catalyze the spread of the infection; and assess the knowledge gap. A cross-sectional study was conducted in 2014 and involved 504 expatriate single male laborers seeking health care in two Qatar Red Crescent health centers. The socioeconomic and behavioral information were obtained by interviewing and blood samples were collected. Results showed that single male laborers constituted heterogeneous group from several countries notably South Asia and with a wide age range from 20-60 years. Many respondents were new comers, uneducated unskilled laborers. Study results revealed that only 5% of the total participants have ever been tested for hepatitis C and positive serology was detected in 4 respondents (0.8%), three of them from Egypt and one from Nepal. Three out of the 4 positive cases did not know they were infected and 2.5% lived with someone harboring the infection. Respondents appeared to have varying healthcare needs with 57% subject to medical procedures outside Qatar. Various risk practices for hepatitis C infection were reported including ear/body piercing (21.9%), tattooing (13.3%), contact with blood (17.0%), sharing personal equipment (12.2%) and injecting with used needles or syringes (7.4%). Less than 40% of respondents had knowledge of all modes of hepatitis C transmission. Further actions notably building HCV monitoring system, setting a prevention plan, building screening strategy were need to be complemented by a contract renewal or a 3-year screening policy.

Biography

Hamad Eid Al Romaihi received his Medical degree from the Arabian Gulf University, Kingdom of Bahrain in 2004. He underwent Arab Board Community Medicine training in 2009 and received his Fellowship in Public Health in 2011 in UK. From September 2016 to present, he is taking up Diploma in Travel Medicine at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons in Glasgow, Scotland, UK. He joined the Ministry of Public Health in November 2012 as Head of Surveillance and Outbreak Control. His current post is Manager of Health Protection and Communicable Disease Control. He is also a Public Health Medicine Consultant with special interests in emerging infections, travel health and immunization.

halromaihi@moph.gov.qa

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