



# Surveillance, epidemiology and prevention of Hepatitis A in Lithuania

## Results of the EUROHEP.NET feasibility survey

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### COUNTRY CHARACTERISTICS<sup>1</sup>

- Total population: 3,465,000
- GDP per capita (Intl \$, 2001): 7,978
- Life expectancy at birth m/f (years): 66.2/77.6
- Health expenditure/capita (Intl \$, 2001): 478
- Health expenditure as % of GDP (2001): 6.0

### OBJECTIVES and METHODS

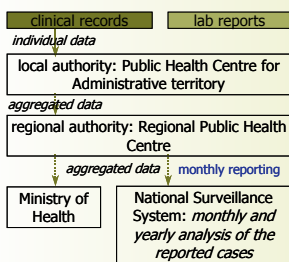
The EUROHEP.NET project is a EU concerted action, supported by the Quality of Life Programme of the fifth framework of the European Community for research. This project addresses issues related to surveillance and prevention of hepatitis A and B in the EU countries, Associated States and Israel. The overall goal is to study the feasibility of a future network on surveillance and prevention and to facilitate the progress of these countries towards enhanced control of hepatitis A and B.

Early 2003, EUROHEP.NET sent a feasibility survey to all participating countries to take stock of the country-specific surveillance and prevention activities for hepatitis A and B. The first achievement of this EU concerted action is to provide in a standardized/comparative way an overview of the different surveillance systems, epidemiology, burden of disease and prevention programmes for these infectious diseases.

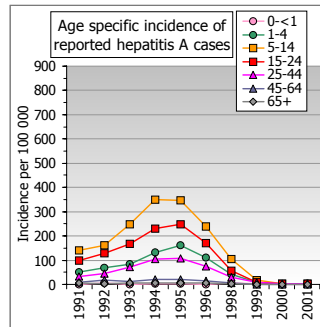
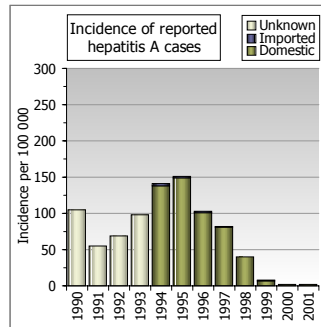
## SURVEILLANCE

Surveillance system	Since 1955 viral hepatitis	
mandatory reporting	yes	passive
voluntary reporting	no	
sentinel	no	
laboratory	no	

Flow chart of the surveillance system



## EPIDEMIOLOGY<sup>2</sup>



### CASE DEFINITION

- An own nation-wide definition is used: A case that is compatible with the clinical description of acute viral hepatitis and is laboratory confirmed.
- Definition of an **outbreak**: 3 or more cases related to time, place or person.

## BURDEN OF DISEASE<sup>2</sup>

Acute hepatitis A	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Hospitalised cases/100 000 inhabitants	73.70	40.43	8.14	2.11	1.87
Hospitalisation days per case	15.0	13.2	12.4	11.5	11.8
Deaths	0	1	0	0	0
Mortality (total number of deaths per 100 000)	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total number of liver transplants not hep A specific	0	0	0	0	0

**Outbreaks of hepatitis A:** 1997-2001: no outbreaks

## COMMENTS

- Surveillance in Lithuania is passive and mandatory.
- Hepatitis A is considered as an endemic disease because of the incidence data and results from seroepidemiological studies, last conducted in 2002 on the general population.
- Official recommendations for risk groups are available at the end of 2003.
- According to statistical data (monthly/ annual reporting forms) of the Centre for Communicable Diseases prevention and control, 841 travellers were vaccinated in 2002.
- The sharp decrease in the incidence of hepatitis A could be explained by a complex mixture of influences including the improved living conditions, smaller family size and more hygienic food handling.

## PREVENTION by active immunisation

Risk group programmes	Available since <sup>3</sup>
injecting drug users	2003
men who have sex with men	2003
international travellers to endemic areas	1997
chronic liver disease patients	2003
clotting factors disorder patients	2003
medical and paramedical personnel in hospitals including kitchen staff and cleaners	2003
people residing in areas of extended community outbreaks	2003
pre-school children attending day care centres	2003
day care centre personnel	no
residents and staff of closed communities (Psychiatric Institutions and Institutions for mentally disabled)	2003
refugees residing in temporary camps	no
food-service establishment workers/food handlers	2003
household contacts of infected persons	2003
children of migrants visiting an endemic country of origin	no
other risk groups	no

## FOOTNOTES

- Country characteristics: [www.who.int/country/en/](http://www.who.int/country/en/)  
Figures are for 2002 unless indicated. Source: the World health report 2003 (derived April 2004).
- Sources of epidemiological data are data of Lithuanian Health Information Center. Since 1997 hospitalisation is no longer compulsory.
- Hepatitis A vaccine is available since 1996 in Lithuania. At the moment of the survey, official recommendations for risk groups were in progress and were planned to be implemented at the end of 2003.