**Surveillance, epidemiology and prevention of Hepatitis B in Greece**

Results of the EUROHEP.NET feasibility survey

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Early 2003, EUROHEP.NET sent a feasibility survey to all participating countries to take stock of the country-specific surveillance and prevention of 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.

**OBJECTIVES and METHODS**

The EUROHEP.NET project is a 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. The overall aim is to facilitate the progress of these countries towards enhanced control of hepatitis A and B.

**Burden of Disease**

- Acute hepatitis B: Hospitalised cases/100000
- Chronic hepatitis B: Hospitalised cases/100000
- Deaths
- Cirrhosis cases
- Total number of patients with hepatocellular cancer
- Total number of liver transplants
- Mortality (total number of deaths per 100 000)

**Prevention by active immunisation**

- Universal screening policy for pregnant women
- Vaccination of neonates
  - 1998:
    - public pediatric use: 9.26€ (Engerix B)
  - 2001:
    - household contacts of known hepatitis B carriers
- Other risk groups

**Case definition**

- EC Hepatitis B case definition is used:
  - • Probable: clinical picture compatible with hepatitis (e.g. discrete onset of symptoms and jaundice or elevated serum aminotransferase levels) and HBsAg positive.
  - • Confirmed: clinical case definition and laboratory confirmation (IgM antibody to antiHBc or HBV nucleic acid in serum).

**Epidemiology**

- Age specific incidence of reported acute hepatitis B cases

**Comments**

- Surveillance for hepatitis B is passive and based on a mandatory system.
- EC case definition is used for surveillance purposes.
- Hepatitis B is considered a low to moderate endemic disease with HBsAg carrier rates around 2%.
- Sero-epidemiological and prevalence studies are under evaluation.
- Universal vaccination programmes exist for newborns and children at the age of 6 years. Many risk groups are also vaccinated in a voluntary or mandatory way.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Clinicians as well as laboratories and infectious control nurses report regularly cases. No age specific data are available.
2. No hospitalization data are available, nor mortality data.

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