### Surveillance, epidemiology and prevention of Hepatitis B in Italy

**Results of the EUROHEP.NET feasibility survey**

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#### 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. The project addresses issues related to surveillance and prevention of hepatitis A and B in the EU countries, associated States and candidate countries. The overall aim of this first phase of the project is to enhance the surveillance and prevention and to facilitate the progress of these countries towards an 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/comparable way an overview of the different surveillance systems, epidemiology, burden of disease and prevention programmes for these infectious diseases.

#### EPIDEMIOLOGY

**BURDEN OF DISEASE**

**COMMENTS**

- Hepatitis B is considered a low endemic disease with carrier rates of <2%. There is underreporting of <5%.
- Specific programmes for risk groups are in place.
- Cost for hepatitis B vaccines: private pediatric use: 19.50€ (Engerix B) and 19.63€ (Hbvaxpro).
- Prevention by active immunisation

**FOOTNOTES**

1. National surveillance system is a sample-based system, collecting the data on the number of patients in the public health units (approximately 60% of the total health costs spread in Italy, approximately 40%)
2. Source for hospital admission data is MOH notification: DRG (Diseases Related Groups: used in the system for the surveillance of hospital admission to classify, on the basis of final diagnosis, all the patients admitted to the hospital according to the classification system of the MOH). This morbidity data, cause rates, ICD codes and some data on hospitalisation are originated from hospital systems, do not include chronic Hepatitis B cases.

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**CASE DEFINITION**

- ICD hepatitis & case definition is used
- *Probable* clinical picture compatible with hepatitis (e.g., discrete onset of symptoms and elevation of transaminase levels) and/or positive HbsAg
- *Confirmed* clinical case definition and laboratory confirmation (IgM antibody to anti-HBc or HBV nucleic acid in serum)

**EPIDEMIOLOGY**

- Age specific incidence of HBsAg carrier rate

**PREVENTION by active immunisation**

- Universal screening policy for pregnant women
- Vaccination of infants*
- Vaccination of adolescents*
- *mandatory vaccination

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**BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

- Medical records
- Laboratory
- Accurate data collection
- Analysis and interpretation
- Reporting
- Follow-up visits