

SEROEPIDEMIOLOGY OF HEPATITIS C VIRUS AMONG RESIDENTS OF AN ABORIGINAL TOWNSHIP IN SOUTHERN TAIWAN

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The positivity rate of antibody to hepatitis C virus (anti-HCV) was reported as 1% for the general population of Taiwan. Both human leukemia/lymphoma virus type-I (HTLV-I) and HCV are body fluid-transmitted viruses, residents of an aboriginal township with a high prevalence of HTLV-I was studied to examine the positive rate and familial aggregation of anti-HCV. A total of 398 subjects in 119 randomly selected households were recruited. The hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) carrier status and anti-HCV positivity were examined by radioimmunoassay and enzyme immunoassay, respectively using commercial kits. Sociodemographic characteristics and history of blood transfusion and tattooing were obtained through standardized interviews based on structured questionnaires. The anti-HCV positive rate of

study subjects was as high as 5.8% (23/398). It increased with age and peaked at ages of 30-39 years. The age-adjusted anti-HCV positive rate was 6.5% and 4.7%, respectively, among males and females. There was no significant association of age-adjusted anti-HCV positive rate with marital status, history of blood transfusion, and paternal and maternal ancestry. HBsAg carriers had slightly higher age-adjusted anti-HCV positive rate (7.6%) than non-carriers. Although there were two families with two family members infected by HCV, no statistically significant familial aggregation was observed. The reasons for the extraordinarily high anti-HCV positive rate among residents in the township remain to be elucidated. (*J Natl Public Health Assoc (ROC)*: 1992;11(2):124-130)

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