

Surveillance, epidemiology and prevention of Hepatitis A in Slovenia

Results of the EUROHEP.NET feasibility survey

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COUNTRY CHARACTERISTICS¹

- Total population: 1,986,000
- GDP per capita (Intl \$, 2001): 18,490
- Life expectancy at birth m/f (years): 72.8/80.5
- Health expenditure/capita (Intl \$, 2001): 1,545
- Health expenditure as % of GDP (2001): 8.4

OBJECTIVES and METHODS

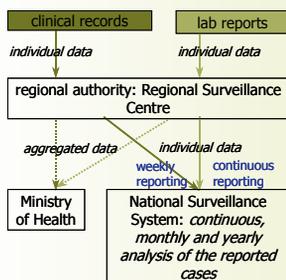
The EUROHEP.NET project is a EU concerted action, supported by the Quality of Life Programme of the fifth framework of the European Community for research. This project addresses issues related to surveillance and prevention of hepatitis A and B in the EU countries, Associated States and Israel. The 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.

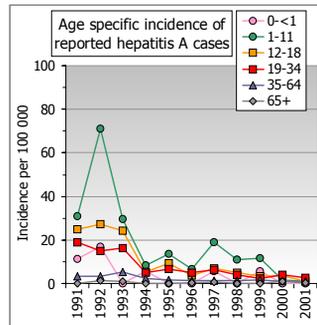
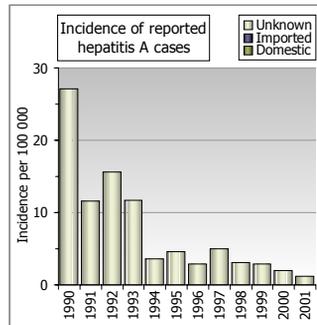
SURVEILLANCE

Surveillance system	Since 1950	
mandatory reporting	yes	passive
voluntary reporting	no	
sentinel	no	
laboratory	yes	passive

Flow chart of the surveillance system



EPIDEMIOLOGY⁴



CASE DEFINITION

EC case definition is used:

- Probable:** clinical picture compatible with hepatitis (e.g. discrete onset of symptoms and jaundice or elevated serum aminotransferase levels) and epidemiological link.
- Confirmed:** clinical case definition and laboratory confirmation (IgM antibody to hepatitis A or nucleic acid in serum or antigen in stool)

- Definition of an **outbreak:** the incidence of cases in a specified community which is higher than the average incidence in a specified population at a specified time.

BURDEN OF DISEASE

Acute hepatitis A	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Hospitalised cases/100 000 inhabitants	3.23	2.08	2.28	1.21	0.85
Hospitalisation days per case ²					
Deaths	0	0	0	0	0
Mortality (total number of deaths per 100 000) ³	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of liver transplants not hep A specific	0	4	9	10	9
Proportion of liver transplants due to hepatitis A	0	0	0	0	0

Outbreaks of hepatitis A: 1997-2001: six outbreaks were reported.

COMMENTS

- Surveillance for hepatitis A is passive and mandatory.
- Hepatitis A is considered not endemic in Slovenia.
- Last sero-epidemiological study was conducted on blood donors and travellers in 1998.
- Underreporting is calculated by comparison of hospital statistics and morbidity/mortality statistics.

PREVENTION by active immunisation

Risk group programmes	Available since
injecting drug users	1995
men who have sex with men	1995
international travellers to endemic areas	1995
chronic liver disease patients*	2002
clotting factors disorder patients*	2000
medical and paramedical personnel in hospitals including kitchen staff and cleaners	no
people residing in areas of extended community outbreaks	no
pre-school children attending day care centres	no
day care centre personnel	no
residents and staff of closed communities (Psychiatric Institutions and Institutions for mentally disabled)	no
refugees residing in temporary camps	no
food-service establishment workers/food handlers ⁵	1997-2001
household contacts of infected persons	no
children of migrants visiting an endemic country of origin	2001
other risk groups	no

* risk groups with mandatory vaccination

FOOTNOTES

- Country characteristics: www.who.int/country/en/
Figures are for 2002 unless indicated. Source: the World Health report 2003.
- For the hospital admission data, the clinical records are the basis.
- Mortality data come from the Mortality database.
- The sources of epidemiological data is official notification.
- The vaccination of foodservice establishment workers/food handlers is since 2002 no longer in place.