

Vertical transmission of hepatitis C from pregnant - mothers to their offsprings

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Besides from dermal route, recently vertical transmission of hepatitis C has been a matter of investigation and the risk of transmission is evaluated. The aim of this study was to determine the risk of mother-to-infant vertical transmission of hepatitis C.

Methods: In this descriptive study, over a period of 2 years, between Aug. 1998 and Jun. 2000, two thousands pregnant women were examined in the obstetric department of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences. The patients underwent serologic study to screen the presence of antibody to hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HIV infection.

Clinicolaboratory tests were also scheduled for offsprings of HCV-Ab positive mothers at birth, 6 and 12 months later. Results were presented using descriptive methods.

Results: Twelve (0.6%) of the 2000 women were found to be positive for HCV antibody. In two (16%) of them, positive history of jaundice was recognized, 3 (25%) patients had positive history of hepatitis in their families, 2 (16%) patients had blood transfusion, 4 (33%) patients had dental procedures and 2 (16%) patients had history of major operation in the previous years. Serologic screening tests for antibodies to HIV and hepatitis B surface antigen were negative. All of 12 women had normal liver function test during pregnancy and after delivery, the offsprings of these anti-HCV positive mothers were screened for HCV infection at birth and 6 and 12 months after birth. All of babies were positive for HCV antibody at birth but became negative at 6 and 12 months of age. Liver function tests were within normal range during this period.

Conclusion: Vertical transmission of hepatitis C is uncommon and anti-HCV antibody is most likely to be acquired passively in uterus and is eliminated by the age 6 months. No endogenous anti-HCV antibody production was detected at 12 months of age.

Key words: Hepatitis C – Pregnancy – Metranal – Fetal – Exchange

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