HEPATITIS B PREVALENCE IN PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEWBORNS IN ALBANIA

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Problem statement: Evaluation of Hepatitis B infection is not tested routinely in pregnant women in Albania. This study is important to inform and implement this test in the examination list approved during pregnancy. Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection is a serious global public health problem. The infection may be transmitted through sexual intercourse, parenteral contact or from an infected mother to the baby at birth and, if contacted early in life, may lead to chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma. Methods: 4000 pregnant women are registered to participate in this program. All of them are registered for one year in "Queen Geraldine" Hospital. They are tested for HBV by immunology test. Positive results are published and follow up for treatment of mother and child after delivery. Results: Among 4000 women tested for HBV we registered 165 positive results or 4.12 %. The average age of this group is 26.8 years old. The average weeks of pregnancy in positive result group is 37.6 weeks. All of them delivered live babies and only in one baby we experienced fulminant hepatitis B or 0.03 % in total population or 0.6 % of positive group. Screening of all pregnant women and passive immunization with human hepatitis B immunoglobulin should be the best way for prevention of this transmission although it is not affordable for many developing countries. It is cheaper and safer if we compare the expenses to treat the infected child with the application of vaccines for positive mothers. Conclusions: The most common route of infection for HBV remains vertical transmission from mother to child. Screening of all pregnant women and passive immunization with human hepatitis B immunoglobulin should be the best way for prevention of this transmission although it is not affordable for many developing countries. However, availability of a safe and efficacious vaccine and adoption of appropriate immunization strategies are the most effective means to prevent HBV infection and its consequences.