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Antibodies to hepatitis C virus in patients who have had multiple transfusions in Sri Lanka; JArticle; Ceylon Medical Journal; Vol: 46; No.(3); 2001\_91-94pp

Abstract : To determine the prevalence of antibodies to hepatitis C virus (HCV) in patients who have had multiple transfusions in Sri Lanka. University Medical Unit at the National Hospital, Colombo, the Cancer Institute, Maharagama, and the Lady Ridgeway Children's Hospital, Colombo. Patients One to 5 ml of blood for serology was collected from 200 multiply transfused patients (those who have received five or more blood transfusions). The sera were tested for HCV specific antibodies using a third generation anti-HCV enzyme immunoassay (EIA) kit. All sera giving positive or intermediate EIA results were re-tested by a commercial HCV Western blot confirmatory test. Of the 200 patients, 10 (5%) were repeatedly positive and confirmed by the Western blot. 33% (7/21) of haemophiliacs and 10% (3/31) of thalassaemics were positive for antibodies to HCV. Antibodies were not detected in other groups of multiply transfused patients (haemolytic disease, aplastic anemias, chronic renal failure, haematological and other malignancies) Of the 200 patients, those who have had more than 80 blood transfusions had a significantly higher prevalence of antibodies to HCV. The frequency of HCV infection was also higher among those who had received factor concentrates. 33% of haemophiliacs and 10% of thalassaemics who have received multiple transfusions were infected with HCV. These findings warrant a larger study among blood donors, and justify screening and decontamination of blood and blood products given to haemophiliacs and thalassaemics in Sri Lanka.