

Prevalence of hepatitis C virus infection among Egyptian patients with schizophrenia

Fawzi, M. H. Fawzi, M. M. Saeid, N. S.

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Although the importance of identifying high-risk groups and individuals infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV) has been recognized, there is a dearth of published information on the prevalence of HCV among people with schizophrenia, a population which is probably at high risk, particularly in a country such as Egypt, where HCV infection is rampant and causing a huge public health crisis. Of the 413 patients consecutively attending The Psychiatric Out-Patients Clinic, Zagazig University Hospitals with a diagnosis of schizophrenia whom we studied, 131 (31.7 %) were HCV positive compared to 86 (21.5%) HCV positive out of 400 control subjects ($p=0.001$). In all of the HCV positive individuals, the diagnosis of hepatitis C was a de-novo diagnosis. HCV infection was significantly higher among males than females in both patient ($p=0.010$) and control groups ($p=0.002$) and among older than younger patients ($p=0.000$) and controls ($p=0.000$).

Correlations between history of injection for schistosomiasis and HCV infection in both patients and controls were highly significant ($p=0.000$) and also between intravenous drug addiction and HCV infection in patients ($p=0.000$) as well as in controls. We should like, therefore, to suggest that Egyptian patients with schizophrenia have to be offered screening for HCV infection. This may have to be more mandatory if patients are from Sharkia governorate, male and above the age of 40, and especially so if there is a history of injection for schistosomiasis or intravenous drug addiction.