
The Rate of Hepatitis B-C and HIV Seropositivity Among Inpatient Intravenous Heroin Users

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Objective: Intravenous (IV) drug use is a risk factor for spread of hepatitis B-C and HIV infections. The aim of this study is to determine the rate of seropositivity of those agents in an inpatient sample and to evaluate sociodemographic and clinical correlates related to this issue.

Methods: A descriptive study of 107 IV drug users who were recruited from a total of 391 inpatient drug addicts was done at Balikli Greek Foundation Hospital Psychiatry Clinics in Istanbul in 2000. All patients were diagnosed with heroin dependence according to DSM-IV criteria by two psychiatrists. Sociodemographic and clinical features were determined by a questionnaire. Serologic tests were assessed by microparticle enzyme immunoassay technique (Abbott). Frequency, chi-square and t test statistics were done on data.

Results: The study group contained eight women and 99 men. The mean age of the group was 28.9 years (SD=6.9); the mean length of time of IV heroin use was 1.9 years (SD=1.8). The rate of injector sharing was 48.6% (N=53). The distribution of serologic test results was as follows: HbsAg 2.8% (N=3), Anti-HBs 29.9% (N=32), Anti-HCV 44.9% (N=48), Anti-HIV I-II 4.7% (N=5).

Conclusions: The rate of seropositivity with HBV, HCV and HIV is found higher than the general population. Because viral hepatitis and HIV infections are growing health problems in Turkey, educational and preventive interventions should be planned especially for high-risk groups throughout the country.