

A-17 Unlinked anonymous testing of clinical samples for human immune-deficiency virus (HIV) infection

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A sudden increase in the number of cases tested positive for HIV was seen in 1992 and 1993, but the upward trend did not continue as expected. Some attributed this to the effectiveness of the awareness programmes but others felt that cases are being missed and as such, the surveillance activities should be intensified. This study was undertaken to test clinical samples on an unlinked anonymous basis, in order to determine the prevalence of HIV infection among different categories of hospitalized patients.

A total of 1430 sera (739 received in 1996 and 691 received from 1992-1995) and 218 cerebro-spinal fluid (CSF) samples received in 1996 were tested for antibody for HIV using a particle agglutination test (Serodia - Fujirebio). These samples were from (a) patients at high risk - Hepatitis B positives (822), (b) possible AIDS presentations such as meningitis, encephalitis, "congenital" infections (350), and (c) fever and non-B Hepatitis cases (476). The age groups varied from 2 months to 55 years. There were 832 males and 753 females (age was not known in 53). HIV antibody positive sera were sent to the central anti-venereal diseases clinic (AVDC) laboratory for confirmation.

Samples in each category were taken for the test in a random manner noting down only the age and the sex.

Of a total of 1648 serum and CSF samples tested, only 1 was positive for HIV antibody. This was confirmed by the central AVDC. This was a serum sample from a hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) positive male patient. The age group is not known. The sample was received in 1996.

This study has shown a prevalence rate of 0.76% (1/131) HIV infection among HBV infected patients, diagnosed in 1996. Although blood from voluntary donors is routinely tested for evidence of HBV and HIV infection, careful screening of donors is important as the tests may not detect cases in the early stage of infection. Greater care should also be taken to maintain sterility of skin piercing instruments.