Abstract

The asymptomatic nature of Hepatitis B and C virus infection is a factor that has a major impact on the disease burden. The knowledge of such blood transmissible infections among youths, who are the fulcrum of blood donation especially in developing countries where there are many ailments that require blood transfusion, is pertinent. This study was therefore to determine the prevalence of these viral infections among apparently healthy youths. Two hundred consenting youths aged 17-45 years participated in the study. There were 52% (104) males and 48% (96) females. A blood sample was collected from each participant and screened for HBsAg and anti-HCV antibody using a chromatographic test kit for each virus (ABCON Laboratories USA). The general prevalence of hepatitis infection among the youths was 14.5%. While HBsAg was prevalent in 11.5% of them, 3% were HCV positive and 0.5% had a coinfection with HBV and HCV. Gender specific prevalence was 18.7% and 4.8% for males and females respectively (p<0.05). The highest prevalence of HBV (20.0%) was recorded among those aged 33-39 years. A HCV prevalence of 5.2% and 0.9% was recorded among males and females respectively (p>0.05). Coinfection of HBV and HCV was recorded only in one participant aged 24 years. Most of the risk factors evaluated in this study only showed an arithmetically not a statistically significant association with the viral seropositivity. The high prevalence of HBV(11.5%) and relatively low prevalence of HCV (3.0%) in this study population is a cause for alarm. This is because this is the age group that is usually recommended for blood donation. Moreso, this is a sexually active group in a region that has a high prevalence of Human immunodeficiency virus with which both HBV and HCV share common routes of transmission. This study also demonstrated the obscurity of risk factors associated with HBV and HCV transmission in this environment. There is therefore an urgent need to make screening and vaccination available and affordable in the study area. This is in order to enjoy the gains of early diagnosis which curbs the progression of the infection to the disease and also allows for correct medication choice for HIV positives. Key words: HBV, HCV, prevalence, Nigeria, youth

Keywords: Parallel, Hepatitis, Virus Infection