

Anti-HAV antibodies in beta-thalassemia

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Thalassemic patients were found to present a higher prevalence of anti-HAV IgG antibodies than matched healthy subjects from the same geographic area. This finding is difficult to explain, but it may be attributed to the higher vulnerability of thalassemics to HAV infection and to passive transfer of anti-HAV antibodies by blood transfusion.

This study, performed by a team led by Associate Professor C Labropoulou-Karatza and Dr D Siagris, is described in a research article to be published on March 14, 2008, in the *World Journal of Gastroenterology*.

In Greece, the lack of Hepatitis A epidemics since the early 1980s and the improvement of socioeconomic and hygienic conditions over the last decade seem to have contributed to a decline in prevalence of anti-HAV antibodies. However, the authors observed that the majority of their beta-thalassemia patients were anti-HAV-IgG-positive.

In the view of the authors, the findings of this study are in contradiction with those of previous studies which showed a lower prevalence of anti-HAV antibodies in thalassemic patients.

In order to further reduce the incidence of liver infections in multitransfused thalassemic patients, the authors recommend active immunization for HAV in that population.

In the view of the reviewers, the strength of this study is surely due to the dimension of the population and the long history of the patients (10

years).

Further research, including testing the prevalence of anti-HAV antibodies in family members of thalassemia patients and in the frozen aliquots of donors' plasma, would confirm these findings.

Source: World Journal of Gastroenterology

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