

The ignored virus that causes liver cancer

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Hepatitis G virus was identified in 1995. Some little research was carried out on the virus and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) declared it a non-harmful virus in 1997. Researchers in Saudi Arabia, writing in the *International Journal of Immunological Studies* present evidence to suggest that this may have been the wrong decision. They claim that transmission of the virus through donated blood that was not screened for the virus as well as infection through other routes has led to an increase in cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer.

Hepatitis G [virus](#) (HGV) was renamed as GB virus C (GBV-C) and is a virus in the Flaviviridae family but has not yet been assigned to a genus. Intriguingly, some evidence suggests that co-infection with the [AIDS virus](#), HIV, somehow enhances the immune system in those patients. However, it is the effects of the virus on the livers of otherwise healthy patients that is of concern to Mughis Uddin Ahmed of the King Abdulaziz Hospital (NGHA) in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia. He points out that since the FDA declared the virus not to cause health problems to humans in 1997, no donated blood has been screened for this virus.

However, Mughis Uddin Ahmed has carried out a review of the scientific literature for the last 16 years that show the virus to be quite prevalent around the globe. Moreover, there is a correlation with infection with this virus and hepatitis, cirrhosis of the liver and it is possibly linked to hepatocellular carcinoma. Mughis Uddin Ahmed also found an apparent link with hematological disorders and hematological malignancies.

For this reason, he suggests that research should be carried out into this virus to determine whether it is a true [human pathogen](#) and a viral carcinogen. He also advises that screening of donated blood for this virus should be reinstated urgently rather than healthcare workers continuing to transferring the virus ignorantly to blood recipients and risking the same morbidity and mortality outcomes seen with hepatitis C virus transferred from donor to recipient until screening for that virus was adopted.

More information: "Hepatitis G virus (HGV): where we stand and what to do?" in Int. J. Immunological Studies, 2011, 1, 255-263

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