

Researchers highlight need for better evidence to guide EU efforts to increase hep B+C testing

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The apparent dearth of research on hepatitis B and C testing in many European countries could be hampering efforts to identify infected individuals, according to results from a comprehensive review of 136 studies presented today at The International Liver Congress 2015.

The systematic review concluded that the current evidence base on [hepatitis](#) B and C testing appears to be lacking in many European countries. At present it is informed primarily by published articles and conference abstracts from just 6 out of 53 member countries of the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region: Turkey, Germany, Italy, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The results indicate that some high-risk populations have been studied much more than others, but mostly only in a small number of countries. The results also appear to show high median testing uptake levels across Europe. However, since almost all of the studies used methodologies that required or encouraged study participants to undergo testing, high median testing uptake levels are not likely to be representative of the overall testing uptake in most populations.

"It's clear from our review that there are crucial gaps in our knowledge on hepatitis B and C testing - we do not yet have enough information to plan effective public health responses in Europe," commented Professor Jeffrey Lazarus, Professor of International Health Systems at

Copenhagen University, Denmark. "Our research team is particularly concerned about the low numbers of published studies looking at migrants, prison inmates and men who have sex with men - all populations that might benefit greatly from targeted hepatitis testing interventions."

Professor Tom Hemming Karlsen, Scientific Committee Member, European Association for the Study of the Liver, added: "Viruses that affect the liver, such as hepatitis B and C, can cause real problems if not identified and treated early. We need to raise awareness of the threat posed by these viruses and actively encourage testing across Europe. This is not only vital to diagnosis and treatment but also to prevention - to stopping the viruses spreading through populations and generations to come."

More information: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF HEPATITIS B AND C TESTING IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE WHO EUROPEAN REGION, The International Liver Congress 2015.

Provided by European Association for the Study of the Liver

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