

Hepatitis causes and effects



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Abstract

Hepatitis, one of the major incurable diseases, still exists nowadays endangering many people's lives. It has many types i. e. Hepatitis A, B, C, D, E and G. The nature of Hepatitis is viral which is caught by either through body fluids or improper personal hygiene in addition to other causes which remains unknown. This disease leads into serious physiological effects such as fatigue, jaundice and serious liver complication like liver Cirrhosis. Psychosocial effect which is another outcome of Hepatitis includes social withdrawal, anxiety, depression and suicidal tendency. Despite of the extensive researches to find a cure for Hepatitis, there is still no effective treatment for it so the responsibility of avoiding this infection is both on government and individuals.

Hepatitis is one of the most fatal diseases which was discovered in the early eighties; it can be defined as an inflammation of the liver organ. Hepatitis is derived from the Latin words “ Hepat” which means the liver and “ itis” inflammation. The usual cause of Hepatitis is a virus that invades the body through blood stream.

This virus could get into the body either through body fluids or improper personal hygiene, leading to serious physiological and psychosocial effects. There are several types of Hepatitis, such as A, B, C, D, E and G. A, B and C viruses are the most common types of Hepatitis and all these viruses can cause similar problems and have similar symptoms, but they spread in different ways and have different effects on the body.

There are several modes of transmission including contaminated body fluids, improper personal hygiene in addition to idiopathic causes. Contaminated body fluids include saliva, blood, feces and urine. Blood transfusion is the most common method, where the blood is transferred from an infected patient to another patient what would be called " Horizontal Transmission". Another method is the " Vertical Transmission" which occurs when a pregnant woman pass it to her fetus. Furthermore," contaminated needles shared by the drug abusers or in medical accidents such as needle pricks" is another way emphasized by (Nowak and Handford, 2004, p. 379). Having unprotected sex and multi-partners are other ways leading to this disease according to Nowak and Handford (2004) whom reported that " Sexual transmission does occur, particularly among the homosexuals. Note also that 20% of infected heterosexuals pass the virus to their spouses."(p. 380). All of the above mentioned causes can lead to Hepatitis B and C which are the most dangerous ones.

The second major cause of Hepatitis is poor hygiene, for instance, personal and general. To start with contaminated water such as sewage lanes, rivers and public toilets are places of great risk for caching Hepatitis A especially to those who live nearby. This type of Hepatitis is usually transferred by feces according to Fiore (2004) " HAV is primarily transmitted by the fecal-oral route, either by person-to-person contact or by ingestion of contaminated food or water "(p. 705-15). Moreover, unwashed vegetables and shellfish, such as clams and oysters may be contaminated by sewage to become sources of infection to humans. Also, personal hygiene is another element for

contacting hepatitis and can occur by sharing razors, toothbrushes and towels, and leads to Hepatitis B and C.

Despite previously discussed causes of this disease, there is still a great sector of hepatitis which remains unknown. Statistics shows that “ approximately 30% of hepatitis B infection are of unknown origin.... 40% of Hepatitis C cases are idiopathic” (Nowak and Handford, 2004, p. 379-80). Where another article points that “ sources is unknown but could be considerable; 50% of reported patients with hepatitis A do not have an identified source of infection” (Fiore, 2004, p. 706). But McHutchison & Bacon (2005) emphasized in their diagram of “ Figure 2: Sources of Infection for Persons With Hepatitis C ” that only “ 10 % of Hepatitis C infection are unknown”(p. S287).

There are many effects of this disease which lie under the two categories: the physiological effects and psychosocial effects. Where the physiological effects contain all the symptoms of Hepatitis, the psychosocial effects indicate the emotional and social consequences of being a Hepatitis patient. The symptoms of the various forms of hepatitis are similar and they are caused by the damage in the liver. The most noticeable symptom is jaundice which causes a yellowing of the skin. Other symptoms associated with hepatitis include fatigue, general body pain, nausea, mild fever, and loss of appetite. As the infection spreads in the liver, the organ becomes enlarged. It may cause pain in the abdomen and in worst scenario can lead to liver Cirrhoses which mean total liver damage and eventually death. It takes seven to eight weeks after exposure to the Hepatitis virus for the symptoms to appear.

A patient with Hepatitis is not only predisposed to physical symptoms, but also to emotional and social problems. These complexities include depression and social withdrawal as each one leads into the other, added to that depression and anxiety which commonly occur together. Anybody who suffers from Hepatitis will be anxious and this anxiety may lead in to depression in sever cases, for example when a patient suffers from Hepatitis and he knows it is a serious illness defiantly he will not stop worrying, these worries can make the person preoccupied with his illness and lead him to depression. Moreover, a Hepatitis patient social withdraw as a result of being unable to find a partner who is willing to live with this fatal disease. It is also hard to make people understand the nature of this serious disease and make friends and families accept and accommodate it. All this may drive the patient to be lonely and tempt to be suicidal.

To sum up, Hepatitis is still one of our life time mysteries to be solved. The spread of this disease is mostly due to the natural or hygienic causes in addition to some percentage of idiopathic causes which is still unknown. Like any other illness, Hepatitis has many drawbacks which could be listed under two categories physiological and psychosocial. Unfortunately, despite the advanced field of medicine Hepatitis remains un-ended and research continues in order to find the ultimate treatment for it. Until a final cure is found, precautionary steps should be taken by both government and individuals. The government is responsible to ensure infection control awareness over this disease through its health system. But it is a personal responsibility to prevent oneself from this disease as well as any other

disease by following the simple rules of hygiene and ensure to get proper health care from reliable health establishments only.

References

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