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Hepatitis B epidemiology in Morocco

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Hepatitis B virus infection is a serious public health problem and the leading cause of liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that 2 billion people have been infected with HBV and that approximately 240 million people are chronically infected. Hepatitis B virus is a partly double-stranded DNA virus with several serological markers. Analysis of genome-wide nucleotide divergence has allowed for the identification of nine genotypes (A-I) and several sub-genotypes. A safe and effective vaccine has been available since 1981, and in 1992, the WHO recommended that all countries should introduce universal HBV vaccination into their routine immunization programs. Universal vaccination in infants has resulted in a sharp decline in prevalence. A seroprevalence survey was conducted in the general population and blood donors, which confirmed a downward trend in the hepatitis B virus (HBV) incidence and might reclassify Morocco in low endemicity area. Among adults, the high prevalence of HBV was primarily associated with nosocomial exposures and sexual risk behaviors. Moreover, molecular epidemiologic studies reveal remarkable differences in the geographical distribution of HBV genotypes and mutant's frequencies. The role of HBV genotypes/mutants in the pathogenesis of HBV infection and natural history has been extensively investigated. The study of the HBV genetic diversity in Morocco showed a predominance of genotype D and apparition for the first time of genotype E and mixed infections A/D and D/F. We also reported that precore variants could be found in more than three quarters of Moroccan patients with HBV infection. Their prevalence was related to HBV genotypes. In addition, we have characterized the first cases of antiviral resistance in patients under treatment and no mutation was detected in naive subjects.

Biography

Abdelouaheb Benani is the Head of Molecular Biology Laboratory at Pasteur Institute of Morocco which is a national reference Molecular Biology Laboratory for Hepatitis C RAMED Program (Moroccan Ministry of Health). He is also the Elect-President of Arab Society for Virology, 2nd Vice-President of Moroccan Society for Virology and an Active Member on the Advisory Board, Consultative Meeting on Regional Strategy for Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis and Other Epidemics-Prone Blood-Borne Diseases, in 2008 (WHO/EMRO, Cairo, Egypt). In 2002, he got his PhD in Molecular Microbiology (Fes, Morocco) on the Molecular Epidemiology of Hepatitis C in Morocco. In 1993, he got his Master of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology at Université Libre of Bruxelles (ULB, Belgium) in anti-tumoral action of *Parvoviruses*. He is an Active Researcher in molecular epidemiology of HBV and HCV in general population and high-risk groups in Morocco. He has organized the 1st International Symposium for Virology in Morocco in 2003 (Marrakech, Morocco), the First PCR Forum and Molecular Typing at Pasteur Institute of Morocco, and the Hepatitis C Workshop at the 5th World Congress on Virology (Atlanta, USA 2015). He is implicated in student's research for their training, Master and PhD. He has participated in several international and national workshops and congresses. He has published in several international journals including Journal of medical virology, BMC public health, Virology Journal, European Journal of Public Health. He serves as a Reviewer as well as Editorial Board Member of some international journals. Currently, he is a reviewer of some grant agency.

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