

4th World Congress on Virology

October 06-08, 2014 Hilton San Antonio Airport, TX, USA

Comparative burden of Hepatitis B and C virus infections to HIV among residents in North-Central Nigeria

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Introduction: Hepatitis B and C virus infections are global public health challenge especially in developing countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia. However, in Nigeria, there is a relatively very low awareness about it and little or no known well coordinated strategy to combat this silent killers “Hepatitis B and C” compares to HIV/AIDS. The aim of this was to compare the seroprevalences of Hepatitis B and C virus infections to HIV among apparently healthy residents of Ilorin town, in North-Central, Nigeria.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted from July, 2012 to September, 2012 among apparently healthy populace of Ilorin town, Kwara state, North Central Nigeria. Socio-demographic and possible risk factors data were collected from 941 apparently healthy residents using a structured interviewed administered questionnaire. Venous bloods were collected and the serums were tested for hepatitis B surface antigen and anti-hepatitis C antibody using rapid Immunochromatography assay. HIV Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assays (ELISA) was used to determine the HIV status. Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS software package (version 20). Chi-square and Binary regression were used to assess risk of association. A p-value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: The response rate was 99%. The prevalence of Hepatitis B, C and HIV were 18.9%, 0.10% and 0.40% respectively. Most of the respondents (35.1%) were within 21-30 years age group. Majority of the respondents were Muslim (96.4%), male (54.2%), married (59.4%) and 62.6% attained tertiary educational level. Past history of surgery, scarification marks and jaundice were factors found to increase the likelihood of contracting Hepatitis B with odd ratio of 2.027, 2.076 and 2.523 respectively.

Conclusion: Hepatitis B virus infection comparatively poses a greater public problem than HIV or hepatitis C infection in Ilorin, North Central, Nigeria. There is urgent need for a well coordinated strategy similar to that of HIV/AID to curb the surge of this ‘silent killer’ Hepatitis B virus infection.

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