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Immunochromatographic testing method for Hepatitis B, C in blood donors

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Background: Hepatitis is an inflammatory condition of the liver and viral hepatitis is a conventional term used to denote hepatitis caused by hepatotrophic viruses (Hepatitis A-G). High prevalence of these viruses was reported in Nigeria. Hepatitis B and C may cause liver cirrhosis and they can be contacted through contaminated blood and blood products. Many blood banks in Nigeria screen for hepatitis B and C using immune-chromatographic screening method (Rapid test strip). This is because these strips are readily available in the market, cheap, requires no electricity for storage, special training or equipment before use. The intent of our study is to compare the sensitivity of this method using an advanced immunological method.

Method: 660 potential donors are tested for hepatitis B surface antigen (HBs Ag) and hepatitis C virus antibody using immune-chromatographic test strip and ELISA methods.

Result: We found out that 38 (5.7%) out of 660 subjects tested positive for HBS Ag using immunochromographic method while 71 (10.8%) were positive using ELISA. None were positive for hepatitis C antibody using immunochromatographic method while 4 (0.6%) subjects were positive using ELISA method.

Conclusion: Immunochromatographic method is not good enough to screen blood donors for hepatitis B and C.

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