Asians Have Higher Rates of Hepatitis B, Study Confirms

A major survey of U.S. adults found that overall hep B treatment rates were very low.

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The highest rates of hepatitis B virus (HBV) in the United States are seen among Asians, in particular those born outside of the country, Healio reports. Long-term survey data also indicated that rates of hep B treatment are very low among those living with the virus.

Publishing their findings in the journal Hepatology, Michael H. Le, of Stanford University Medical Center's division of gastroenterology and hepatology and colleagues analyzed data on 47,618 adult respondents to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey between 1999 and 2016. They looked at data on HBV as it pertained to exposure to the virus, infection, self-reported vaccination status, vaccine-induced immunity and awareness of liver disease status.

The study defined HBV infection as a positive hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) test result and past exposure as a positive hepatitis B core antibody (anti-HBc) test result. Vaccine-induced immunity was defined as a positive hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs) test along with a negative anti-HBc test.

A total of 0.49% of the respondents tested positive for hep B, of whom 37.9% were born in the United States and 62.1% were foreign born. There was no significant change in the hep B prevalence across the years of the study. The researchers estimated that 0.35% of adult U.S. residents, or about 840,000 people, have HBV.

During 2011 to 2016, estimated HBV prevalence in the United States was highest among Asians, including 3.85% among foreign-born Asians and 0.79% among those born in the country.

The proportion of respondents who had been exposed to HBV declined from 5.8% during 1999 to 2000 to 4.7% during 2015 to 2016. This decrease was driven solely by those born in the United States, among whom HBV exposure declined from 4.2% to 2.7% between the two periods. People born in the United States were significantly more likely to report having been vaccinated against HBV and to show evidence of vaccine-induced immunity.

Across all racial groups, among those who had hep B, only 15.2% were aware of having liver disease and just 4.6% were on treatment for the virus—rates the study authors considered

“dismal.”

To read the Healio article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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