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Hepatitis B in healthcare workers: Transmission events and guidance for management

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Abstract

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) is the most efficiently transmissible of the bloodborne viruses that are important in healthcare settings. Healthcare workers (HCWs) are at risk for exposure to HBV from infected patients and, if infected, are similarly at risk of transmitting HBV to patients. Published cases of HBV transmission from HCW to patient are relatively rare, having decreased in frequency following the introduction of standard (universal) precautions, adoption of enhanced percutaneous injury precautions such as double-gloving in surgery, and routine HBV vaccination of HCWs. Here we review published cases of HCW-to-patient transmission of HBV, details of which have helped to guide the creation of formal guidelines for the management of HBV-infected HCWs. We also compare the published guidelines for the management of HBV-infected HCWs from various governing bodies, focusing on their differences with regard to vaccination requirements, viral load limits, frequency of monitoring, and restrictions on practice. Importantly, while there are differences among the recommendations from governing bodies, no guidelines uniformly restrict HBV-

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