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Hepatitis C virus infection and prisoners: Epidemiology, outcome and treatment

Rosa Zampino, Nicola Coppola, Caterina Sagnelli, Giovanni Di Caprio, Evangelista Sagnelli

Abstract

The studies on hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection in prison populations are few and mostly cross-sectional. We analyzed prevalently the articles appearing on PubMed in the last ten years. HCV infection is frequent in prisoners, prevalences ranging from 3.1% to 38% according to the HCV endemicity in the geographical location of the prison and in the countries of origin of the foreign prisoners and to the prevalence of intravenous drug use (IVDU), which is the most important risk factor for HCV infection, followed by an older age of prisoners and previous prison terms. HCV replication in anti-HCV-positive cases varies from 45% to 90% in different studies, and the most common HCV genotypes are generally 1 and 3. The response to antiviral treatment is similar in prisoners to that of the general population. Unfortunately, treatment is administered less frequently to prisoners because of the difficulties in management and follow-up. The new directly acting antivirals offer a good therapy option for inmates because of their good efficacy, short duration of treatment and low incidence of side effects. The efforts of the prison authorities and medical staff should be focused on reducing the spread of HCV infection in prisons by extending the possibility of follow-up and treatment to more prisoners with chronic hepatitis C.

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Electron micrograph of hepatitis C virus purified from cell culture (scale = 50 nanometers)
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Hepatitis C infection causes acute symptoms in 15% of cases. ... nausea, muscle or joint pains, and weight loss and rarely does acute liver failure result,