Five-year Follow-up of Hepatitis B Surface Antigen Positive Healthy Voluntary Blood Donors: A Preliminary Observation

Dear Editor,

Data on the profile and outcome of healthy voluntary blood donors (VBDs) who are detected incidentally to be hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) positive at the time of blood donation are scanty. We studied 45 such subjects (M: F 40:5; average age of 27 years) at the Tirath Ram Shah Hospital, Delhi. At presentation they were assessed with clinical examination, liver function tests, serological tests (HBeAg, anti-HBe and HBVDNA), alfa-feto protein (AFP) and ultrasound (USG). All the subjects were followed-up for five years (July 2000 to June 2005) with clinical and biochemical assessment every six months and serological assessment with AFP and USG every year.

Five of these 45 (11%) were positive for HBeAg (Table). Two subjects (Group II) had pre-core mutant infection.¹ On follow up, none of the subjects from any group had clinical / biochemical deterioration or had developed HCC. Two subjects from Group III cleared HBsAg, whereas, in the rest 43 subjects serological profile remained the same on follow up. The benign course as reported in this observation is in agreement with other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group (No.)</th>
<th>HBsAg</th>
<th>HBeAg</th>
<th>Anti-HBe</th>
<th>HBVDNA</th>
<th>ALT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I (5)</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>-ve</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II (2)</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>-ve</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III (38)</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>-ve</td>
<td>+ve</td>
<td>-ve</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Serological profile at presentation (n = 45)
However, there are contrary reports in the literature. It is likely to be due to the heterogeneous study group in the report by Chandra et al. It is known that hepatitis B can lead to serious consequences such as cirrhosis and HCC. Moreover, there are reports of these sequel even after development of anti-HBs antibodies. It is therefore, mandatory for HBsAg positive subjects to have a regular follow-up. Although the short-term outcome of five years on HBsAg positive healthy VBDs is observed to be quite good, there is a clear need to derive long-term follow-up data on these subjects.

References


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