HEPATITIS B VIRUS SEROPREVALENCE AND INFECTIVITY STATUS AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN ABAKALIKI, SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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BACKGROUND: Hepatitis B Virus infection is a global public health problem and an important cause of liver disease in pregnancy. It is highly endemic in Nigeria and it is estimated that about 9-12% of the total population of Nigeria are chronic carriers of hepatitis B surface antigen.

OBJECTIVES: To determine the seroprevalence of hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) in pregnant women at the Federal Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki, southeast Nigeria and to determine the infectivity status of those who are HBsAg-positive.

METHODOLOGY: This was a Cross-sectional study of 300 pregnant women accessing antenatal care in the facility. HBsAg screening and HBeAg test were done using Clinotech diagnostic HBsAg and HBeAg test Kits respectively. SPSS version 16.0 software package was used for statistical analysis.

RESULTS: Sixteen pregnant women were seropositive for Hepatitis B virus infection giving a prevalence rate of 5.3%. One (6.3%) of HbsAg seropositive respondents tested positive for HbeAg. Women in the age group 21-30 years had the highest HBV infection rate.

CONCLUSION: This study confirms a high seroprevalence of Hepatitis B virus infection amongst pregnant women. It is recommended that pregnant women should be routinely screened for Hepatitis B virus infection as part of antenatal care services. Children born to HBsAg mothers should be given the required prophylaxes.