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The prevalence of Hepatitis C virus among Pediatric patients attending an antiretroviral treatment center in Central Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria has one of the world's largest burden of children living with HIV and is also reported to be endemic for viral hepatitis. Coinfection of HIV with hepatitis C (HCV) is an important comorbidity to consider when making management decision. Due to the dearth of such information in the study area, this baseline study was carried out to evaluate the prevalence of HCV among pediatric HIV patients and some possible risk factors. Two hundred consenting HIV infected children on Antiretroviral therapy(ART) were recruited for this study. A blood sample was collected from each patient and screened for anti HCV antibody by a rapid test (ABCON Laboratory). Information on sociodemographic and history of exposure to risk factors like scarification and blood transfusion were obtained. The general prevalence of HIV/HCV coinfection was 11.0% in this study. It was most prevalent among children aged 3 – 8 years old ($p \leq 0.05$) and only 4.5% of those with a history of blood transfusion were HCV positive ($p \leq 0.05$). It was neither associated with gender nor scarification ($p \geq 0.05$). The level of coinfection in this study group suggests the need for pre-ART screening for HCV. This will help reduce the risk of HCV related liver diseases through proper patient management.