

Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Educational Needs Toward Hepatitis B Virus in Arab Communities: A National Study in Oman

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Introduction: Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection is a serious global public health problem and a major cause of acute and chronic hepatitis, liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma.

Methods: This cross-sectional study aimed to evaluate the knowledge, attitudes, practices and educational needs toward HBV infection. Participants from all regions of Oman were invited to complete an online validated self-administered questionnaire using a convenience sampling approach.

Results: Overall, 1056 participants (74.8% female and 25.2% male) completed the survey; of which, 169 (16%) were healthcare providers. Of the total, 810 (76.7%) claimed that they knew about HBV through the Internet, friends and social media, which were the most common sources of their knowledge. However, participants had unsatisfactory knowledge regarding HBV, including the symptoms, mode of transmission and prevention, with a mean total score of 13.46 out of 20 (SD = 2.68). Factors such as having a higher education level, being married and working in the medical field were significantly associated with increased awareness of HBV ($p < 0.001$). In addition, participants were found to have a poor level of practice towards HBV infection, with a mean total score of 4.3 out of 8 (SD = 1.6). Furthermore, 73.5% of the participants have not done HBV screening. Significant positive correlations between knowledge and practice toward HBV ($r = 0.305$, $p < 0.01$) were observed. Most of the participants (1044, 98.8%) supported school-based HBV education programmes.

Conclusion: This study suggests that there is insufficient public awareness of HBV infection in Arab communities. However, the study suggests that better HBV knowledge can lead to good practices. Therefore, it is imperative for policy guidelines along with extensive health education campaigns to support HBV good practices and elimination in Oman and other Asian countries.

Keywords: Hepatitis B, Knowledge, Attitudes, Practice, Hepatitis B Elimination, Healthcare Providers, Middle East

Disclosure of Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Human subjects approval statement

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethical Committee of College of Nursing at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).