

Effectiveness of Interventions for Hepatitis B and C: A systematic review of Vaccination, Screening, Health Promotion and Linkage to Care Within High Income Countries

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Background:

Viral hepatitis is a significant global health concern. Due to globalisation and mass international migration, diseases that have historically affected low-middle income countries have become increasingly prevalent in high-income countries. High prevalence of viral hepatitis is of particular concern due to the associated morbidity and mortality, as well as the increased risk of community transmission. Long-term effects of viral hepatitis include liver cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer. This contributes to the widening of health-related disparities in high-income countries.

Methods:

A systematic review was performed utilising the PRISMA guidelines for transparency and complete reporting. Articles that reported on interventions aimed at improving awareness, testing, identification and linkage to care for migrant populations from high endemic viral hepatitis regions, who have settled in high-income countries. 37 studies were retrieved from PubMed, CINAHL and Embase that met the inclusion criteria.

Results:

Awareness raising strategies such as engagement with community leaders, ethnic media and community events were found to be successful. As were multi-lingual physician-led educational seminars. Testing and vaccination was found to increase with the use of participatory, flexible and community based screening and education programs. Programs that were church-based and offered bilingual staff were more effective. Linkage to care, follow-up and monitoring benefited from patient navigators. Links between outpatient health centers and community organisations were found to be important.

Conclusion:

Inequities in the burden of viral hepatitis exist within and between countries, with migrants from endemic regions being disproportionately affected in high-income countries. The planning and management of viral hepatitis prevention, diagnosis and treatment must reflect this in the provision of appropriate and accessible services. This requires concurrent strategies, tailored to the needs of the migrant populations, alongside building the capacity of health professionals and the healthcare system.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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