Abstract

Objective. To measure hepatitis C virus (HCV) sero-prevalence, prevalence, hepatitis risk characteristics frequency, and genotype correlation with viral load among clients attending health care clinics. Material and Methods. Venous blood samples from 112,226 consecutive consenting adults were collected from January 2006 through December 2009. HCV antibodies were detected by immunoassay. HCV RNA was detected by qRT-PCR and viral genotype was performed by PCR and LIPA test. Results. The HCV seroprevalence observed was 1.5% (C.I. 95% 1.3-1.7), from seropositive individuals 60.9% reported previous blood transfusion, 28.3% declared to have relatives with cirrhosis, 25.2% had tattoos or piercings, and 6.9% referred to have used drugs. Male gender and transfusion (p<0.001) were the most frequent hepatitis risk characteristics in the HCV seropositive group. Among seropositive subjects 48.3% presented HCV RNA. The most frequent genotype detected in all geographic areas of Mexico was 1 (subtype 1A, 33%, subtype 1B, 21.4%) followed by genotype 2 (subtype 2A, 8.50%). Subjects with genotype 1 had a significant correlation with the highest viral load. Conclusions. Our results show that nearly half of seropositive individuals are chronically infected. HCV infection has been shown in this study to be an emerging health problem in Mexico.

Keywords

HCV, seroprevalence, genotypes; viral load, Mexico.