



In 1999 the Department of Epidemiology received 61 notifications of patients with acute hepatitis B, comprising 40 men and 21 women. Fourteen notifications of patients with acute hepatitis C were also received, nine men and five women. Three of the patients were notified as having both hepatitis B and hepatitis C. The number of notified hepatitis B cases fell in 1999 by 36% from 1998, when 95 cases were notified, EPI-NEWS 23/99. During the period 1993-1998 the annual number of notified hepatitis B cases was fairly steady. The figure for 1999 reverts to the level for 1991-1992, when the lowest number of cases were recorded since the individual notification system was introduced in 1980. The number of notified hepatitis C cases also fell from 25 cases in 1998 to 14 in 1999. The county distribution of acute hepatitis B cases is given in table 1.

Table 1. Cases of acute hepatitis B by county, with incidence per 100,000, 1999 (1998)

County	No.	Incidence	
		1999	(1998)
Cph. Municip.	17 *	3.5	(4.7)
Frb. Municip.	4	4.4	(2.2)
Cph. County	9	1.5	(1.3)
Frederiksborg	5	1.4	(1.9)
Roskilde	0	0,0	(1.8)
West Zealand	1	0.3	(1.0)
Storstrøm	3 *	1.2	(1.9)
Bornholm	0	0,0	(2.2)
Funen	5	1.1	(2.3)
South Jutland	1	0.4	(0.4)
Ribe	1 *	0.4	(0.9)
Vejle	3	0.9	(1.7)
Ringkøbing	0	0,0	(1.1)
Aarhus	3	0.5	(0.6)
Viborg	3	1.3	(3.0)
North Jutland	5	1,0	(1.2)
Unspecified	1	-	-
Total	61	1.1	(1.8)

*) Includes 1 person with both hepatitis B and C

Acute hepatitis C was notified in five patients from Funen and three from Storstrøm County. The other hepatitis C notifications were of single cases in different counties. The fall in the number of notifications was evenly distributed over the whole country and the Municipality of

HEPATITIS B AND C 1999

Copenhagen continued to account for about 1/4 of the notifications. Age and sex distributions are shown in table 2. Twice as many men as women were notified, whether for hepatitis B or hepatitis C. As in previous years, the vast majority belonged to the 20-39-year age group.

Table 2. Notified cases of acute hepatitis B and C by age and sex, 1999

Age	Hepatitis B		Hepatitis C	
	M	F	M	F
0-14	2	4	0	0
15-19	1	2	0	0
20-24	5	5	1	0
25-29	7	2 *	2	2 *
30-34	10	2 *	1	2 *
35-39	7 *	2	2 *	0
40-44	2	0	2	0
45-49	1	2	0	1
50+	5	2	1	0
Total	40	21	9	5

*) Includes 1 person with both hepatitis B and C

Six children under the age of 15 years were notified with acute hepatitis B. One child was 1½ years old while the others were aged 6-14 years. Four were of Turkish origin, and two of these were thought to have been infected during a stay in their homeland.

Table 3. Notified cases of acute hepatitis B and C by presumed mode of infection, 1999

Mode of infect.	B	C	B+C
I.v. drug use	11	9	3
Homosexual	7	-	-
Heterosexual	13	-	-
Nosocomial	1	-	-
Close social contact	6	-	-
Tattooing	2	-	-
Unknown	18	2	-
Total	58	11	3

Table 3 shows the distribution by mode of infection. I.v. drug use was the presumed mode of infection in 23% (14/61) of patients with hepatitis B and in 86% (12/14) of patients with hepatitis C. Of the hepatitis B patients were 21% possibly infected by heterosexual contact; seven of these were infected by contact with a person at known risk of having hepatitis

B. In two cases contact was with an i.v. drug user, in three cases with a person from a high-endemic area (Thailand or Africa), in one case contact was with a prostitute, and in the remaining case no details of the contact were stated. All the heterosexually infected patients were Danes. One case was notified as being related to blood transfusion. This was a patient with multiple injuries who had received many blood transfusions. Look-back revealed a donor who was the overwhelmingly probable source of infection. At blood donor screening this donor had been HBsAg-negative, but was found to be positive one month later. In two cases the patient had been tattooed three months before the onset of illness. One person was thought to have been occupationally infected, by contact with blood from a patient with a traumatic injury at the psychiatric institution where the person was employed. As in previous years, the mode of infection was unknown in many cases, table 3. The decrease in notified cases of acute hepatitis applied particularly to persons infected by i.v. drug use and heterosexual contact.

Comment

A possible explanation of the recorded decline in the number of notified cases of acute hepatitis B could be that no major outbreaks were detected in 1999. However, the fall in the number of notifications appears to be continuing into the year 2000.

New notification regulations

Hitherto only acute cases of hepatitis B and hepatitis C have been notifiable. However, hepatitis C is rarely diagnosed during the acute stage, and chronic hepatitis C is mainly diagnosed in i.v. drug users. On 1 May 2000 the National Board of Health's new regulations on physicians' notification of infectious diseases and other matters came into force. These have now made both acute and chronic hepatitis B and C obligatorily notifiable conditions. This should bring about a considerable improvement in the surveillance of these diseases in future.

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Patients with positive cultures of pathogenic intestinal bacteria, 2000, by county

	Campylobacter		Yersinia enteritidis		S. typhimurium		S. enteritidis		Other zoon. Salmonella spp.	
	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May	June
Cph. Municip.	44	62	2	1	3	1	29	3	12	9
Frb. Municip.	11	13	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
Copenhagen *)	-	75	-	2	-	2	-	11	-	8
Frederiksborg	16	38	1	2	2	1	5	2	4	3
Roskilde	13	21	-	3	2	-	6	4	7	4
West Zealand	8	13	-	-	-	1	4	3	2	2
Storstrøm	15	18	1	1	1	1	1	5	5	2
Bornholm	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Funen	33	55	1	2	3	4	3	17	1	3
South Jutland	18	25	-	-	2	-	12	2	6	2
Ribe	20	21	2	1	2	2	6	9	3	3
Vejle	11	36	1	3	3	4	7	8	-	3
Ringkøbing	17	30	3	1	-	1	7	4	4	2
Aarhus	57	46	3	2	3	2	10	6	5	4
Viborg	14	13	-	3	1	2	5	2	1	-
North Jutland	14	31	3	2	8	4	7	7	6	2
Not stated	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1
Total, May-June 2000	293	502	17	23	30	26	103	84	57	49
Total, May-June 1999	310	462	17	24	33	71	95	95	42	53

*) Figures for Copenhagen County comprise only part of the diagnosed cases in May

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