

Letter to the Editor

Occupational Risk of Blood-Borne Viruses in Healthcare Workers

To the Editor:

In the June 2002 issue of *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*, Baldo et al.¹ reported that their post-exposure follow-up among healthcare workers revealed a lack of transmission of hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). These results are confirmed by observations at the University Hospital of Antwerp.

From 1998 through 2001, 364 healthcare workers reported occupa-

tional exposure. The types of exposures in relation to the serologic profiles of the source patients are summarized in the table. All healthcare workers with anti-HBs levels of less than 10 IU/mL were vaccinated against hepatitis B virus infection. Postexposure prophylaxis (AZT, 3TC, and indinavir) for HIV was offered to the healthcare workers if the source was positive for HIV, as per Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations.²

Serologic follow-up was done after 3 and 6 months. No transmission of hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, or HIV was observed among the healthcare workers.

REFERENCES

1. Baldo V, Floreani A, Dal Vecchio L, et al. Occupational risk of blood-borne viruses in healthcare workers: a 5-year surveillance program. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol* 2002;27:325-327.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Public Health Service Guidelines for the Management of Health-Care Worker Exposures to HIV and Recommendations for Postexposure Prophylaxis. *MMWR* 1998; 47(RR-7):1-28

Frank Van Laer, RN, CIP
Infection Control Department

Renno Roelandt, MD

Elke Coenen, MD

Occupational Medicine Department
University Hospital of Antwerp
Edegem, Belgium

TABLE

SEROLOGIC PROFILES OF THE SOURCE PATIENTS IN RELATION TO THE TYPE OF EXPOSURE

Type of Exposure	No.	%	Source Patients					
			HCV Positive		HBV Positive		HIV Positive	
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bite	1	0.3	1	100.0	-	-	-	-
Mucous membrane	33	9.0	5	15.2	3	9.1	11	33.3
Needle	286	78.6	8	2.8	9	3.1	8	2.8
Sharp object	44	12.1	-	-	-	-	1	2.3
Total	364		14	3.8	12	3.3	20	5.5

HCV = hepatitis C virus; HBV = hepatitis B virus; HIV = human immunodeficiency virus.