

The risk of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection was marginally higher among healthcare waste workers compared with domestic waste workers, probably because of needlestick accidents owing to deficient sharps management systems” Mol et al (2016).

Abstract:

Infection with the hepatitis B and C viruses may occur through contact with infected body fluids, including injury with infected sharps. Collectors of domestic or healthcare wastes are potentially exposed to these infections. The aim of this article is to investigate the risk factors associated with the prevalence of hepatitis B and C viruses (HBV and HCV) infection among domestic and healthcare waste workers in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

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A cross-sectional study of hepatitis B and C infection was conducted from November 2014 to January 2015, through blood sample collection and interviews about socio-demographic factors with 61 workers exposed to healthcare waste ('exposed') and 461 exposed only to domestic wastes ('unexposed'). The prevalence of antibodies to HCV (Anti-HCV) antibodies was 3.3% in 'exposed' workers and 0.9% in 'unexposed', and of antibody to hepatitis B core antigen (Anti-HBc) was 9.8% and 5.6% in 'exposed' and 'unexposed' workers, respectively. Only 207 (44.9%) of those exposed to domestic waste and 45 (73.8%) of those handling healthcare waste were effectively immunised against hepatitis B virus (HBV). Exposures to domestic waste and to healthcare wastes were associated with similar risks of infection with HBV. The risk of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection was marginally higher among healthcare waste workers compared with domestic waste workers, probably because of needlestick accidents owing to deficient sharps management systems. Immunisation against hepatitis B and screening tests to ensure the success of vaccination should be a condition for recruitment for both groups of waste workers.

Reference:

Mol, M.P., Gonçalves, J.P., Silva, E.A., Scarponi, C.F., Greco, D.B., Cairncross, S. and Heller, L. (2016) Seroprevalence of hepatitis B and C among domestic and healthcare waste handlers in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Waste Management & Research. May 19th. .

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