

## ACUTE VIRAL HEPATITIS C

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*Thirteen patients of different age groups were examined. They presented with clinico-biochemical data about acute viral hepatitis serologically decoded as acute viral hepatitis C. In 9 cases an evidence of inoculative manipulations (in 6 venous drug abusers and in 3 cases after surgical interventions) was established. The course of the disease was not very severe. In one patient it was even slight. There was a tendency towards a chronic course in 5 cases. In two patients the catamnestic following-up revealed a histological evidence of chronic viral hepatitis C. Interferon therapy was administered.*

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**Key-words:** Acute viral hepatitis C, drug abusers, diagnosis, treatment

Hepatitis C viral infection becomes an important socio-medical problem which affects a considerable contingent of people in many countries in the world, i. e., about and more than 2 per cent of the population. It is known that there are diverse clinical forms of the infection - from viral carriers to severe forms. The prevalence rate of the primary chronic hepatitis is about 70-80-90 per cent as compared with the acute one. The absent opportunity to examine all the patients with acute viral hepatitis for anti-hepatic C virus (anti-HCV) imposes the search for viral hepatitis C only when the acute viral hepatitis A, B, and D are ex-

cluded in the infectious hospitals (1-6).

The aim of this study was to examine the clinical and epidemiological characteristics of the patients with acute viral hepatitis C (AVH-C) among the patients' contingent hospitalized in the Department of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology, Medical University of Varna, in 1998.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The trial covered a group of 13 patients diagnosed in the Department of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology, Medical University of Varna, in 1998 as a viral hepatitis C infection. A series of clinico-laboratory methods such as anamnesis, patient's status, and analysis of the pathological alterations during the hospital stay, one month after it but in some cases

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during a 2-year period were applied. Several haematological indicators, enzyme activity, serum bilirubin, hepatitis markers such as HBsAg, anti-HBcIgM, anti-HAV IgM, and anti-HCV were studied.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patients' distribution according to age, sex, probable mechanism of transmission of the infection as well as according to the severity of the disease were presented on Tables 1 through 3.

The beginning of the disease was typical of viral hepatitis Icterus manifesta-

tion was preceded by a rather typical preicteric period in almost all the patients. Only a girl coming from the Infectious Division of the District Hospital of the town of Bourgas presented with a chronic course of the disease. Subsequently, she proved to be an intravenous drug abuser. Dyspeptic and asthenovegetative complaints were found in 100 per cent of the cases. In a male patient the disease initiated with similar complaints and rash causing his admission in a haematologic clinic with a preliminary diagnosis of Schönlein-Henoch's purpura. It was rejected after the specification of the diagnosis of AVH-C.

**Table 1**

*Percentage patients's distribution according to the gender and age*

Age (years)	15-30	30-60	Over 60
Males	7	0	1
Females	3	1	1
Total	10	1	2
%	75	8,33	16,67

**Table 2**

*Patients' distribution according to the probable mechanism of transmission of the infection*

Mechanism of transmission	n	%
Surgical intervention	3	23,08
Venous drug users	7	53,84
Unknown	3	23,08

**Table 3**

*Patients' distribution according to the severity of the disease*

Clinical form	Males		Females		Total	
	n	%	n	%	%	%
Slight	1	1,25	1	20	2	15,38
Moderate	7	87,50	4	80	11	84,62
Severe	0	0	0	0	0	0

An acute course of the disease was found out in most cases. A protracted course was observed in 4 patients who were discharged from hospital with transaminase activity within 100-200 UI. One male patient presented with a subacute course of the disease. In another male patient aged 79 years after surgical intervention the disease acquired a chronic course. He was catamnesticly followed-up. Because of his advanced age and of the accompanying diseases after the operation on the occasion of rectal cancer a therapy with interferon was not administered. The latter was given along with ribavirin to another male patient aged 30 years, with a prolonged course of the disease and a slight constant degree of transaminasemia. The transaminase activity normalized after one month of treatment. At present, the interferon therapy continued for a second year and should be stopped.

A slight degree of bilirubinaemia at the average of 130,60 mmol/l was measured at admission to hospital in all the patient while at discharge from hospital it was 23,44 mmol/l. Thymol test was normal at admission in 65,23 % of the patients while at discharge an abnormal elevation was found in one patient only. The average SGPT value at admission was of 629,76 UI, it remained below 1000 UI in all the cases while at discharge the mean

SGPT value reduced down to 92,23 UI. In 9 patients (69, 23 %) there was a residual hepatomegaly not bigger than 2 cm at discharge from hospital. The average hospital stay was about 19,69 days.

A regular catamnestic follow-up observation was possible in 6 patients only because the rest drug abusers did not visit the Department of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology one month after discharge. A persistent transaminasemia was proved in a patient with a protracted course of the disease. Seven months after the onset of the disease the activity of SGPT normalized. In two other patients the transaminase activity normalized within one year.

Our study showed that the viral hepatitis C infection was most common in drug abusers and after surgical interventions. These patients were rarely hospitalized in infectious hospitals along with the stream of patients with acute viral hepatitis. That was why the group of drug abusers dominated in this contingent presenting with an acute character of the disease.

Therefore, one is obliged to carry out comprehensive catamnestic observations with these drug abusers and with all the viral hepatitis patients where several types of hepatitis have been established and an interferon therapy has been administered in comparison with the other viral hepatitis types after the acute stage has passed.

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## Остър вирусен хепатит С

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**Резюме:** Проследени са 13 болни от различни възрастови групи, с клиничко-биохимични данни за остър вирусен хепатит, разшифровани серологично като ОВХ-С. При девет от болните са установени данни за инокулативни манипулации (при 6 - с венозна наркомания, а 3 - с оперативни интервенции). Заболяването е протекло средно тежко, а при един от случаите - леко. С тенденция към хронично протичане са били пет случая. От катamnестичното проследяване при двама от преболедувалите са установени хистологични данни за хроничен вирусен хепатит С и е проведено лечение с интерферон.