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Awareness of hepatitis C

Ömer Öztürk, Ilyas Tenlik, Derya Arı, Hale Gökcan, Sabite Kaçar, Meral Akdoğan

Department of Gastroenterology, Türkiye Yüksek İhtisas Training and Research Hospital, Ankara, Turkey

INTRODUCTION: Viral hepatitis is a public health problem and causes significant mortality and morbidity. HCV is the second most common chronic viral infection in the world. According to 2015 data, 71 million people are living with chronic HCV. It is revealed that there were 1.75 million of new HCV infection cases across the world in 2015 (Global incidence rate: 23.7/100.000). In our country, the prevalence of anti-HCV positivity is estimated around 0.5 to 1%. Accordingly, it is thought that 350.000 to 750.000 people are infected with HCV and that the majority of those HCV infected patients are not aware of the situation. In this study, we aimed to determine how many of the patients with anti-HCV positivity who had anti- HCV positivity at the screening before the interventional procedures were aware their situation.

METHODS: Patients who had anti-HCV positivity during screening tests in the last 5 years were reviewed retrospectively. The demographic data of these patients were recorded and the patients undergoing further investigation and treatment were identified.

RESULTS: Anti-HCV was positive in 1549 patients between 2013-2018. The mean age of the patients was 61.36 (range 9-95). 727 (46.9%) of the patients were not referred for further investigation. Of the 822 patients (53.1%) who were further examined, 420 (27.1%) were HCV RNA negative and 402 (26%) were HCV RNA positive. The genotype was determined in 333 of HCV RNA positive patients. Of these patients, 317 were genotype 1, 4 were genotype 2, 10 were genotype 3 and 2 were genotype 4. Hepatic examination revealed Child A cirrhosis in 54 patients, Child B in 10 patients and Child C cirrhosis in 10 patients. 17 patients developed HCC and 3 of these patients were also positive for Hbs Ag. Fourteen patients required liver transplantation due to hepatic failure secondary to HCV or hepatocellular cancer (HCC).

CONCLUSION: There is not enough awareness for hepatitis C infection which is one of the most important causes of acute and chronic liver disease and has serious morbidity and mortality. Even in a tertiary health facility, one of the two patients with anti-HCV positivity is not guided for further examination.

Keywords: hepatitis C, liver diseases, cirrhosis