



Are patients with chronic hepatitis B infection aware of delta hepatitis?

To the Editor,

All over the world, 5% of patients carrying hepatitis B virus are thought to be coinfecting with hepatitis delta virus (HDV) (1). HDV, seen together with HBV infection as coinfection or superinfection, has a high frequency, reaching 40%-50%, especially in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey (2). HDV infection is similar to other types of viral hepatitis but has a more severe course of disease and increased probability of fulminant hepatic failure (3). Also, with a superinfection, 10%-15% of the patients progress to liver cirrhosis in a short period of time, such as 2 years (4). Thus, it is crucial for patients with chronic hepatitis B (CHB) to be aware of these viruses and to protect themselves from contamination sites, just like the healthy population. The aim of this study was to investigate whether patients with CHB infection are aware of delta hepatitis.

This prospective study was conducted between May 2012 and August 2012. We prepared a questionnaire (Table 1) for patients with CHB admitted for their routine examinations. In this questionnaire, age, gender, duration of the illness, whether information about delta virus/hepatitis was given to the patient and if the patient was informed, and the source from which this information was taken were asked. This study was reviewed and approved by the institutional review board of our university.

A total of 374 patients (212 men and 162 women) answered our survey. The mean age was 43.7 ± 13.1 (16-77), and the mean duration of the illness was 84.4 ± 69.6 (1-360) months; 357 (95.5%) patients said that they had no information about hepatitis D virus/delta hepatitis and had never heard about it, while 17 (4.5%) said they were informed from different sources. Out of 17 patients who had knowledge, 5 (1.3%) patients got information

Table 1. Hepatitis B patient questionnaire

Date:	
1. Please write your name and surname.	
2. Please write your age and gender.	
3. When did you get the diagnosis of Hepatitis B?	
4. Have you ever heard of Delta virus or Hepatitis D virus?	
5. Were you informed about Delta virus or Hepatitis D virus before?	
6. If you were informed, who or which source gave you this information?	
7. Can you write the information that you had been given briefly?	

from the internet, 4 (1.1%) got it from brochures about hepatitis B, 2 (0.5%) had information because of their occupations, and 5 (1.3%) were informed when delta virus infection was detected. Only one patient had information from her clinician.

This study shows that patients are not informed enough about the course of HDV infection or its contamination routes. For this reason, especially in endemic areas, the clinicians must take HDV seriously and make sure that the patients protect themselves from infection routes. The prevalence of HDV infection may decrease after patient education, even in regions with inadequate decreases in prevalence despite vaccination programs.

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