



CODEN [USA]: IAJPBB

ISSN: 2349-7750

**INDO AMERICAN JOURNAL OF
PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCES**Available online at: <http://www.iajps.com>

Research Article

**PUBLIC AWARENESS TOWARDS HEPATITIS B AMONG
GENERAL POPULATION, IN SAUDI ARABIA**

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Abstract:

Background: Hepatitis Virus B is a major health problem worldwide as well as in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) as it is one of the most common contagious infection and cost effective.

Objectives: To Evaluate the knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of general population toward hepatitis B infection in KSA.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 500 Saudi participants aged between 20-60 years old. Participants were conducted during the period from December 2018 till January 2019 and the questionnaire was consisted of 4 parts including the demographics information and KAP.

Results: 500 participants have filled the surveys. The age of the participants were from 20-60 years/old and the majority were between 20- and 30 years old (33.8%). Regarding the knowledge, (87%) have heard about hepatitis disease and (81%) know that hepatitis B affects the liver. Regarding the attitude, (82.8%) will visit physician if they get hepatitis. But unfortunately, only (56%) have been vaccinated against hepatitis B.

Conclusion: The level of KAP toward hepatitis B was moderately acceptable in most of our sample but with insufficient practice among most of participants. More campaigns should be conducted increase the level of awareness towards the disease.

Keywords: KAP, Hepatitis B, Saudi Arabia.

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Please cite this article in press Waleed Khelaiwi Alshamari et al., *Public Awareness Towards Hepatitis B Among General Population, In Saudi Arabia.*, Indo Am. J. P. Sci, 2019; 06(01).

INTRODUCTION:

One of a global infection of humanity is hepatitis B virus (HBV) with estimated prevalence of more than 30% whole over the world but about 350 million of population were found to be serological carries of hepatitis B ⁽¹⁾. It is an infectious and contagious disease and the tenth leading cause of death all over the world [2].

There are many ways for HBV to transmit such as contaminated blood, secretions and unsafe sex. The disease is divided into two phases; acute or chronic infection. The acute phase could cause damage to liver tissue and urgent need for liver transplantation [3]. On the other hand, chronic type is associated with mortality due to its complications like cirrhosis and failure of liver that may ends with liver cancer [4].

Even the hospital workers have HBV because of the most of them have never received vaccines against HBV [5]. Studies that focusing on evaluating the knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) toward hepatitis B which will help in improving the health and preventing the spread of infection [6,7]. This study aimed at evaluating the KAP of Saudi population toward hepatitis B infection for the achievement of valuable preventive measurement.

METHODS:

Study design

A cross sectional descriptive study was distributed among the Saudis participants during the period from December 2018 to January 2019.

Sample size and population

This study included 500 Saudi participants were chosen randomly and their age ranged from 20-60 years old. Privacy and confidentiality of the data were confirmed during the study.

Study tools

The awareness of all participants was evaluated by using a self-administrated questionnaire that contains four parts. The first part included questions about the demographic's information of the included participants, part two involved questions about the knowledge of HBV, while the third part was about attitude and the fourth part was about practice of participants toward HBV.

Statistical analysis

The data were entered then analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

RESULTS:

Demographic Characteristics

500 participants have filled the surveys. The age of the participants was from 20-60 years/old and the majority were between 20- and 30 years old (33.8%), (27.4%) aged from 31-40, (20.2%) aged from 41-50 and (18.6%) aged from 51-60 years old. Most of included participants were males (58%) and (42%) were females. Also. The majority of participants had a college degree (53.4%), (41.2%) had intermediate school and only (6.4%) were illiterate (Table. 1).

Table (1): Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the participated subjects (n=500)

Age (year)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-30	169	33.8
31-40	137	27.4
41-50	101	20.2
51-60	93	18.6
Gender		
Male	290	58
Female	210	42
Education level		
Illiterate	32	6.4
Intermediate	206	41.2
College degree	262	53.4

Knowledge of included participants:

The knowledge of included participants regarding the hepatitis disease was variable, (87%) have heard about hepatitis disease while (13%) have never heard about hepatitis disease. (59%) of participants know

that hepatitis B is a viral disease while (41%) don't if it caused by viral or not. (81%) know that hepatitis B affects the liver but only (28%) believe that hepatitis B could induce liver cancer. More than half of the participants had good knowledge about the symptoms

of hepatitis B (57%), (75%) of participants thought that hepatitis is transmitted through unsafe sex. Also, more than (75%) believe that hepatitis could be transmitted through contaminated blood products, (67%) agreed that the disease could be transmitted

(during pregnancy) from mother to child. Majority of the participants believe that hepatitis B is not curable, (77%) know that there is available vaccination for hepatitis B. (Table 2).

Table (2): Awareness of included subjects (n=500)

Questions	yes	no
1. Do you know the hepatitis disease?	(87%)	13%
2. Hepatitis B is a viral disease?	(59%)	(41%)
3. Hepatitis B affects the liver?	(81%)	(19%)
4. Hepatitis B could result in liver cancer?	(28%)	(72%)
5. Jaundice, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite are symptoms of hepatitis B	(57%)	(43%)
6. Hepatitis B could be transmitted by unsafe sex?	(75%)	(25%)
7. Hepatitis could be transmitted through contaminated blood products?	(78%)	(22%)
8. It can be transmitted from mother to child?	(67%)	(33%)
9. The disease is curable?	(41%)	(59%)
10. Is there available vaccination for prevention of hepatitis B?	(77%)	(23%)

Attitudes of the included subjects:

The attitudes of the participants toward hepatitis was shown in table. 3. Most of the participants showed good attitude, (59%) will talk with someone if they get hepatitis B and (41%) will not tell anyone if they get hepatitis. Fortunately, (82.8%) will visit physician

if they get hepatitis. Also, third of the participants (34%) were frightened toward transmitting the disease to their family, (48%) said that they feel worried from death, (17%) be afraid of being rejected by the society and being isolated.

Table (3): Attitude of participants (n=500)

Questions	No.	Percentage (%)
If you have hepatitis, will tell anyone?		
Yes	295	59
No	205	41
What will be your attitude toward hepatitis B?		
Go to physician	414	82.8
Use herbal medications	34	6.8
Surrender and loss hope	52	10.4
What would worry you if you have hepatitis B?		
Fear of death	240	48
Fear from the treatment costs	5	1
Fear from being isolated from the society	85	17
Fear from transmitting the disease to your family	170	34

Practice pattern of included participants:

The practice pattern of included participants showed that only (23.6%) of participants had screened for hepatitis B, (56%) have been vaccinated against

hepatitis B and (44%) have never been vaccinated toward hepatitis B. Most of the participants (84.2%) avoid contacting with patients having hepatitis B (Table 4).

Table (4): Practice pattern of respondents toward hepatitis B (n=500)

	Yes	No
1. Have you ever Screened for hepatitis B?	118 (23.6%)	382 (76.4%)
2. Have you been vaccinated against Hepatitis B?	280 (56%)	220 (44%)
3. Do you avoid Patients with hepatitis B?	421 (84.2%)	79 (15.8%)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

This study was conducted to evaluate the KAP of Saudi population toward hepatitis B. Study conducted among Saudi children showed that the prevalence of HBV was of approximately 7% [8]. In addition, other studies showed lower rates of prevalence as only 1.31% out of 74,662 individuals tested positive for HBV in 2008(9). In addition, other studies showed that the HBV prevalence in KSA was 1.5% among the population and 2.6% among adult [10].

Most of the participants had moderate knowledge about the methods of HB transmission and symptoms. This was almost same a recent study conducted in KSA showing that there was an acceptable knowledge among Saudis participants toward hepatitis B [6]. In addition, results of the study indicate that most of participants in the present study had a high educational degree, as well as being young aged. However, in other studies in different parts of the world, there was a lack of knowledge among 6th The attitude of the participants was moderately acceptable in the most of questions. It indicates that the level of knowledge was significantly associated with positive attitude [12,13].

Most of the participants in this study have poor level of awareness as most of participants hadn't been screened for hepatitis B infection but most of them have been vaccinated. Recent studies showed low level of practice among studied participants regarding being screened or vaccinated [13].

In conclusion, the level of KAP toward hepatitis B was moderately acceptable in mpst of our sample but with insufficient practice among most of participants. More campaigns should be conducted increase the level of awareness towards the disease.

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