

## Hepatitis—Associated Antigen (HAA) in American Personnel with Acute Hepatitis in the Republic of Vietnam\*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To determine the prevalence of HAA positive hepatitis among American servicemen with acute hepatitis in the Republic of Vietnam.

**DESCRIPTION:** Patients admitted to the 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon, the 24th and 93rd Evacuation Hospitals at Long Binh Post and the 6th Convalescent Center, Cam Ranh Bay, with a diagnosis of hepatitis supported by clinical and laboratory evidence were entered in the study.

Laboratory tests were performed at the admitting hospital. These included Serum Glutamic Oxaloacetic Transaminase (SGOT), direct and indirect bilirubin and alkaline phosphatase. Interviews were performed and sera collected by members of the U.S. Army Medical Research Team (USAMRT Vietnam).

HAA testing was done in Saigon using the agar—gel diffusion technique and aliquots of the sera were also brought to Bangkok for testing by CF and by IEOP in some cases.

**PROGRESS:** The study was conducted from August to December 1970. One hundred seventy five patients met the criteria for inclusion in the study.

Thirty seven (21%) were positive for the hepatitis—associated antigen using the agar gel diffusion technique. Another thirty-four were positive using the more sensitive CF and IEOP techniques. Thus a total of 71 (41%) patients were positive for HAA.

The HAA antigen was detected most frequently in specimens taken during the first week after clinical onset of disease. The percentage of positives decreased progressively in specimens collected after that time.

Comparing questionnaire responses for the two groups, those that had HAA detected in their sera and those that did not, there was no difference in the following variables: race, age, time—in—country, location—in—country, eating on the economy, and drug use. Although time—in—country was not related to HAA detection, the number of cases of hepatitis did increase with increasing time—in—country.

Fifteen patients admitted to the intravenous use of habituating drugs. Of these fifteen only six (40%) were positive for HAA. This rate is very similar to that of the total group.

Convalescent sera, taken from 4—18 days after the initial bleed, were available for 21 patients. Eighteen showed decreasing titers of HAA. In the other 3, the titer increased, but in these cases the second serum specimen was taken only 4 days after the initial specimen.

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\* This study was done jointly by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research Medical Research Team in Saigon and the SEATO Laboratory in Bangkok, Thailand.