

An Epidemiological Study of Hepatitis B Virus Infection in Bangkok, Thailand

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OBJECTIVE: To determine the persistence, acquisition and loss of hepatitis B antigen and antibody in an urban Thai population.

BACKGROUND: This is a continuation report of the Huay Khwang hepatitis B virus study previously described in the SEATO Medical Research Laboratory Annual Progress Report 1971-1972 pp. 129-139, and 1972-1973 pp. 68-69.

This report concerns the third bleed of the study population, done between September and December 1973. Previously specimens were obtained for testing in July 1971, and April 1972.

PROGRESS: From September through December 1973 all persons previously bled were re-visited in an attempt to do a 2 year follow-up on the study population. Of the original study population of 849 persons in 1971, 7 had died and 276 persons had moved since the 1972 survey and were no longer available for the study. The 566 persons available for this third survey represented 66% of the original study population.

Eighty-eight percent (497) of those available submitted specimens; 69 persons refused for various reasons.

Sixty-one persons who had been positive for hepatitis B antigen on one of the previous surveys were again bled on this survey and 60 of these were still positive. Only one person had reverted to negative.

Of the 436 people who were previously negative in 1972, four became positive for antigen. Three of these were asymptomatic. These were children 3, 6, and 8 years of age, two of whom were siblings. The fourth person was a 44 year old male heroin addict ("sniffer") who was jaundiced and had an SGOT of 665 units/ml, suggestive of acute hepatitis.

SUMMARY: In a two year follow-up survey done on the Huay Khwang urban sample being studied for hepatitis B antigen, 60 of 61 (98%) persons maintained their chronic antigenemia, and 4 of 436 (0.9%) developed antigenemia for the first time.