is discussed. Problems of epidemiologic data are : most national disease reporting systems report the total numbers of encephalitis cases, the lack of diagnostic precision has increased difficulty of undertaking focused disease control programs for Japanese encephalitis, as long as all ecologic components required for transmission remain in the environment and the risk of acquiring the disease will continue, vaccine should be made widely at low cost to prevent disease.

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EVALUATION OF AN IMMUNOCHROMATOGRAPHIC ASSAY FOR THE RAPID DIAGNOSIS OF ACUTE HEPATITIS E INFECTION

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There is an urgent need for a rapid and reliable diagnostic assay for acute hepatitis E virus (HEV) infection in endemic areas, particularly for outbreak situations. At present, there is no gold standard for the diagnosis of acute HEV infection. Most cases are diagnosed using an anti-HEV IgM ELISA or RT-PCR. A rapid, immunochromatographic assay for anti-HEV IgM (Genelabs Diagnostics) was evaluated on acute HEV serum samples characterized by positive HEV RT-PCR and anti-HEV IgM > 100 WRAIR Units (n = 200) obtained from patients with clinical hepatitis in Indonesia and Nepal, healthy blood donors in Thailand (n = 100) and acute hepatitis A (n = 80), acute hepatitis B (n = 45) and acute hepatitis C (n = 50) in Thailand, Nepal, Cambodia and Indonesia. The assay performed with 93% sensitivity and 100% specificity for the diagnosis of HEV infection in acute hepatitis samples with no false positives when performing the assay on the acute hepatitis A, B C samples and on samples from healthy blood donors. This data suggests that this assay may be a valuable tool for the rapid diagnosis of acute HEV infection. Additional evaluation in HEV endemic regions with varying antigen concentrations may improve the testing sensitivity without compromising specificity.

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A BLUNTED BLOOD PLASMACYTOID DENDRITIC CELLS RESPONSE IN AN ACUTE SYSTEMIC VIRAL INFECTION IS ASSOCIATED WITH INCREASED DISEASE SEVERITY

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At least two distinct human dendritic cell (DC) subsets are produced in the bone marrow and circulate in the peripheral blood-precursor myeloid DCs (pre-mDCs) and plasmacytoid DCs (PDCs). Both lineages of DCs are instrumental in antiviral innate immunity and shaping Th1