Egypt's spiralling threat of hepatitis C virus – already the highest incidence rate in the world -- is alarming researchers who fear a potential epidemic of the blood-borne disease could spread across the most populous Arab country.

The findings of a recent study published in the National Academy of Sciences showed that more than 500,000 new HCV infection cases occur in Egypt every year. Much of the problem behind the soaring infectious rates is poor healthcare oversight and erratic medical hygiene.

"Nearly seven out of every 1,000 Egyptians acquire HCV infections every year. This is the highest level of HCV transmission ever recorded at a national level for a disease transmitted by use of non-sterile medical instruments," says Dr. F. DeWolfe Miller, lead author of the study.

Prevalence of hepatitis C in Egypt dates back to the 1970s. It was then that health authorities in the Nile Delta and Upper Egypt were injecting patients with tartar emetic to stop the spread of the water-borne disease known as Bilharzia. But many of the needles were unsterilized, causing HCV to spread to thousands of Egyptians.

Nowadays, many blame the government for not halting the virus' proliferation throughout the country of about 80 million people. The Egyptian National Committee on Viral Hepatitis states that 9.8% of Egyptians are HCV infected, whereas doctors and researchers claim that the real figure is between 15% and 20%.

"Most virus C patients come from Egypt's most rural and poorest areas and they rely on the medical...
insurance programs," said Dr. Lotfi Wanees, an expert on hepatitis. "Medication cost for every hepatitis C patient stands at an average of 70,000 Pounds [$12,250] and the government has failed to provide this sum for most of the patients."

He added: "There are also the deals signed between the Ministry of Health and medicine companies. Many virus C medicines produced by Egyptian pharmaceutical firms are not verified in the West and proved to be inefficient. But they are still being prescribed to patients and the government pays millions of pounds to purchase them."

According to Wanees, the "community acquired" virus has also been accompanied by culture and literacy problems, as many of the poor, uninsured patients resort to superstitious and primitive medical substitutes, which worsen their cases.

Complications of hepatitis C lead to liver cirrhosis or liver failure. Many people infected with the virus have no symptoms and are only diagnosed when liver damage appears many years later.

-- Amro Hassan in Cairo

*Photo: Egyptian doctors taking care of a patient. Credit: Associated Press*
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It’s like we won world cup in hepatitis

Posted by: norhan | January 08, 2011 at 06:58 AM

this vector hcv originated in japan around 1942..pretense of mutation of a swine flu vaccine,ie: "contaminated"...japan has 20,000 deaths per year from various hep strains..1977-78 i recieved a contaminated swine flu (batch was supposed to have been destroyed)shot.......goat and bovine colossalum show miraculous ppp remissions as well as nat cell's frozen thymus solution....vitamin c in relatively large doses will stimulate natural interferon production which is vastly superior to synthetic recombinant peg program..mono laurin or its protege laric acid works well and is found in pure cocanut oil 49% levels..blood borne virus that affects the liver and spleen....watch out for the allopatic guvmt. treatments...18 months into treatment your cells can unshed a fresh round of viral coquelicot show miraculous ppd remissions as well as nat cell's frozen thymus solution...vitamin c in contaminated swine flu (batch was supposed to have been destroyed)shot.......goat and bovine colossalum show miraculous ppp remissions as well as nat cell's frozen thymus solution....vitamin c in relatively large doses will stimulate natural interferon production which is vastly superior to synthetic recombinant peg program..mono laurin or its protege laric acid works well and is found in pure cocanut oil 49% levels..blood borne virus that affects the liver and spleen....watch out for the allopatic guvmt. treatments...18 months into treatment your cells can unshed a fresh round of viral

Posted by: templeton st. william | November 14, 2010 at 10:16 PM

I've heard the herb Una de Gato "Cat's Claw" works for that.

Posted by: Criss | November 13, 2010 at 03:18 PM

hepatitis C is another elite bio weapon unleashed to cull the so called useless eaters....Cures exist in ozone therapy, MMS and a zapper ..all cheap and totally denied and suppressed by the elite owned system of murderous medical fascism

Posted by: parasitism | November 12, 2010 at 06:19 PM

This is a reply from Egyptian Ministry of Health

The Egyptian MOH reply to the article titled “Egypt: Hepatitis C infection reaches alarming figures”: Los Angeles Times, 8th Nov., 2010

The Egyptian government considers viral hepatitis and HCV in particular, one the most significant public health priority. Therefore, the Egyptian Ministry of Health (MOH) has in the last five years established the National Committee for Viral Hepatitis and has undertaken the following steps towards HCV prevention and control:

1) Viral Hepatitis Control Strategy (2008-2012): it was outlined to ensure strengthening and expansion of the national multisectoral response to viral hepatitis. It is available online at:

http://www.hepEgypt.org/htdocs/NSP_10_April_2008_final.pdf

2) National Survey: a national HCV survey was conducted in all Governorates of Egypt to determine the actual prevalence of HCV. The survey was conducted within the context of the Demographic and

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-- khelifi burawi

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Health Survey (DHS, 2008) in collaboration with international organizations such as UNICEF, USAID and Macro International. The prevalence in individuals above 15 years was 9.8%.

3) HCV Treatment plan: the national HCV treatment program was started in 2006 and has, up to date, treated 125,000 patients in 21 centers that were established within the MOH Hospitals nationwide. The cost of pegylated Interferon per person is about 18,000 EGY Pounds (about 3000 $) and is totally supported by the MOH in what is considered to be one of the largest hepatitis treatment programs worldwide.

4) HCV Prevention: The Egyptian MOH has been pursuing a comprehensive Infection Control Program which includes infection control in hospitals and other medical and paramedical settings, in addition to the establishment of a national blood bank, a full coverage rate of childhood vaccination against HBV and a strategy to control infection in high-risk groups as health care workers, sanitation workers and injecting drug users (IDUs). A public awareness campaigns is being conducted using media, and other channels of communication.

Concerning the article published in the Los Angeles Times on November 8th, 2010; it has the following inaccurate information:
- The study mentioned in the article was published in the National Academy of Science, estimated the HCV incidence by using a mathematical models and various assumptions. Caution is required in interpreting the results of such studies. Therefore, the figure 500,000 new HCV cases does not reflect the actual number of cases, which needs properly designed incidence studies. Moreover, detection of new HCV infection is challenging because the majority of infected cases are asymptomatic.
- Previous studies have estimated the HCV incidence but the validity of their results was limited because of the very small sample size (the majority of these studies were conducted in selected small geographic areas with high HCV prevalence; not representative of the general population or reflecting the national figures). In other words, they lacked the generalizability of their results.
- The most accurate and accepted figure regarding the HCV prevalence in population above 15 years is 9.8% (Egyptian DHS, 2008). The MOH conducted a study to estimate the HCV prevalence in children below 15 years that represent 36% of the total population. The prevalence of HCV in this age group was 0.52%. In other words, the weighted average of overall prevalence is about 6.6%.
- The cost of HCV treatment per person in Egypt is currently about 3000 $ not 12,000 $. The total annual expenditure for HCV treatment in Egypt is about 900 million EGY pounds (about 158 millions $). The vast majority of anti-HCV medicines are imported from international companies and the remaining small portions are manufactured nationally and verified by the local authority. Randomized controlled clinical trials are now underway to study its efficacy, and preliminary results are encouraging.

In conclusion, the MOH totally disagrees with the claims that were published in your Journal as it is far from fact or any scientific basis. The figures mentioned in the article were a mix of inaccurate scientific data and wrong subjective interpretation. Moreover, the article neglected the achievements that have been done by the Egyptian government towards prevention and control of HCV as the MOH is allocating its maximum available resources in its battle against HCV infection.

Dr. Abdul Rahman Shahen
Media Consultant of Egyptian Minstry of Health

Posted by: Sherif Nafie | November 11, 2010 at 09:01 AM

The LA Times has brought to attention that Egypt has the largest epidemic of hepatitis C in the world. It is very important to understand that this is an ongoing epidemic. It is equally important to know that infection with this virus can be prevented even though there is no vaccine. My friends and colleagues in Egypt are doing a huge job to treat people with HCV and prevent infection. However, Egypt needs more resources for prevention of hepatitis C virus infection. This is my mission.

Posted by: Dr. F. DeWolfe Miller | November 10, 2010 at 12:17 PM

STD counselor on a STD support and community site "stitchchatting, com" said "It's all very well and good to say that oral sex is not safe sex". But how much of a risk are you actually taking if you choose to practice unprotected oral sex? The counselor can solve your problem online.

Posted by: Alomar HIV | November 09, 2010 at 07:13 PM

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What are those virus C medicines produced by Egyptian pharmaceutical firms and are not verified in the West? Can anybody give examples?

Thanks

Posted by: Fady | November 09, 2010 at 10:28 AM

These numbers are alarming.
I would suggest that all Egyptians infected with hepatitis C begin to take inexpensive herbs (milk thistle) and nutritional supplements to help protect the liver. It is the liver that is in danger.

Posted by: Smaimes | November 08, 2010 at 01:34 PM