Prevalence of HIV infection among pregnant women of the Central Sudan

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Brief Report

Prevalence of HIV Infection Among Pregnant Women of the Central Sudan

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KEY WORDS: HIV; pregnancy; women; prevalence; Sudan

INTRODUCTION

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is increasing at an alarming rate globally, it is a major challenge and threat to public health. Recently, pregnant women were reported to be more susceptible to HIV [Gray et al., 2005]. HIV infection in women occurs primarily during their reproductive years, hence pregnancy provides an opportunity for implementing prevention strategies against HIV infection, and effective and timely intervention will reduce the transmission of infection to newborns.

Sudan borders on several countries with a high prevalence of HIV infection. Sudan’s National AIDS Committee plans a series of surveys to determine the prevalence of HIV infection in high-risk groups and in the general population in several geographical regions. HIV surveillance and screening programs were established at the Khartoum Teaching Hospital following the first HIV case in November 1987.

The intermixing of HIV-1 subtypes was reported in Sudan [Hierholzer et al., 2002]. The objective of the present study was to establish base line data for HIV among pregnant Sudanese women, since published data are not available, in spite of high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among pregnant Sudanese women [Ortashi et al., 2004].

This study investigated the HIV seroprevalence of pregnant Sudanese women who attended the antenatal clinic of the Khartoum Hospital (Fatarahman Elbashir), for the first time. Blood samples of all the pregnant women who had been counseled and informed, agreed to participate in the study, were collected and tested for HIV antibodies using ELSIA (Vironostika, Switzerland) technique according to the Sudanese National AIDS Control program during August–November 2005.

Three hundreds five pregnant women out of a total of 1,138 gave their consent to participate in this study and their characteristics were shown in Table I. Three women (1%) were found seropositive for HIV.

This is the first published study documenting seroprevalence of HIV among pregnant Sudanese women. This is low prevalence in comparison with other African countries [Gray et al., 2005; Mseleku et al., 2005; Fabiani et al., 2006]. The low prevalence of HIV in this study might be explained by the small sample of the study as well as the sociodemographic background of these women. However, in a small-sample study, HIV was not detected among 151 Sudanese pregnant women of central Sudan, in spite of the high prevalence of other sexually transmitted disease in women [Ortashi et al., 2004]. Furthermore, HIV was not documented among high-risk group [prostitutes] women in eastern Sudan [Burans et al., 1990]. Higher prevalence (35.7%) of HIV was reported among Sudanese [adults and children] with various congenital coagulation defects [Hashim et al., 1997] as well as among Sudanese patients with tuberculosis [El-Sony et al., 2006]. McCarthy et al. [1995] reported that HIV-1 infection was highly prevalent in southern Sudan especially among prostitutes.

In the present study, the seroprevalence of HIV infection was found to be 1.38% amongst pregnant women in central Sudan. However, the geographical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE I. Basic Characteristics of the 305 Patients Investigated for HIV</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mean value and (SD) for</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gravidity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parity</td>
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<td>Gestational age (weeks)</td>
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<td>Durations of stay in Khartoum (years)</td>
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</tbody>
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influence of high endemicity in neighboring sub-Saharan countries might change the position in the future.

REFERENCES


