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Anti-HAV seroprevalence in Turkish military personnel and its relation with demographic properties

Hanefi Cem GÜL¹

İsmail Yaşar AVCI¹

Ömer COŞKUN¹

Recai OĞUR²

Yakup Hakan BAŞARAN¹

Çakır GÜNEY³

Bülent A. BEŞİRBELLİOĞLU¹

Cengiz Han AÇIKEL²


Can Polat EYİĞÜN¹

Alaaddin PAHSA¹

¹ Department of Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology,
Gülhane Military Medical Academy, Ankara - TURKEY

² Department of Public Health, Gülhane Military Medical Academy, Ankara - TURKEY

³ Department of Microbiology and Clinical Microbiology,
Gülhane Military Medical Academy, Ankara - TURKEY

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 [Authors](#)



medsci@tubitak.gov.tr

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Abstract: Aim: Turkey is a middle endemic area in terms of Hepatitis A Virus (HAV) infection. Previous studies in Turkey showed that most residents had been infected with HAV by the second decade of life. In this study we aimed to detect the anti-HAV seroprevalence rate in Turkish military personnel and its relation with demographic properties. Materials and methods: Randomly selected 1049 military personnel were enrolled in the study. All were male and their average age was 24.97 ± 6.48 (Range: 20-50) years. A questionnaire about their demographic properties was administered to and informed consent forms were obtained from each subject. Statistical analysis was performed with SSPS 10.0 software (SSPS, Inc, Chicago, Ill., USA). Differences were considered significant when $P < 0.05$ for 2 tails. Results: Anti-HAV-IgG test yielded a positive result in 889 (84.7%) subjects. The result was positive for 89.9% of the subjects older than 31 years old and 83.3% of the subjects younger than 31 years old ($P > 0.05$). Of these 1049 subjects, 67.2% were married. Of the anti-HAV-IgG positive subjects, 91.6% were married whereas 81.8% of the anti-HAV-IgG negative subjects were married ($P < 0.01$). Being a villager was observed as a risk factor for HAV infection and HAV endemicity in Marmara and Karadeniz regions was significantly lower than that in the other regions. The educational level of the subjects and also their parents were found to have an effect on anti-HAV seropositivity. As the educational level of the subjects and their parents increased, the anti-HAV IgG seropositivity decreased ($P < 0.01$). Conclusion: The results of our study reveal that HAV exposure may increase due to risk factors, such as socioeconomic and infrastructural problems, personal hygiene, and sources of water and food. Improvement in these factors will lead to fewer exposures to HAV.

Key words: Anti-HAV seroprevalence, demographic properties, military personnel, Turkey

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