



Seroprevalence of Hepatitis C Virus in the Urban Commune of Kindia-Republic of Guinea

**Aissatou Boiro ^{a*}, Mamadou Gando Diallo ^b,
Bonaventure Kolie ^b, Souleymane Diallo ^b,
Abdoulaye Djibril Diallo ^b, Péné Guilavogui ^c,
Mamadou Boundoukhora Bah ^a,
Thierno Amadou Labé Balde ^a, Sanaba Boumbaly ^d
and Mamadou Yéro Boiro ^a**

^a *Guinean Applied Biology Research Institute (IRBAG) BP: 146 Kindia, Republic of Guinea.*

^b *University of Kindia BP: 212 Kindia, Republic of Guinea.*

^c *Regional Hospital of Kindia BP: 143 Republic of Guinea.*

^d *Centre for Virology Research/Guinea-Conakry Haemorrhagic Fever Laboratory, Republic of Guinea BP: 5680 Enta-Nord, Commune of Matoto, Conakry, Republic of Guinea.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Hepatitis C is an inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus; its spread in humans has been boosted by the emergence of parenteral use for medical purposes or drug injections, as well as its asymptomatic nature in the acute phase.

*Corresponding author: E-mail: boiroaissatou4@gmail.com;

The global prevalence of hepatitis C is estimated at 1%, with a variable distribution in different regions of the world, sometimes even within the same country.

General objective: To help improve the biological diagnosis and prevention of HCV infections in the urban commune of Kindia.

Methodology: The urban commune of Kindia was used as the study area. This prospective and descriptive study was carried out at the Institut de Recherche en Biologie Appliquée de Guinée (IRBAG) from June to December 2022. The biomaterial consists of 3,000 blood samples taken from patients attending consultations at health facilities. The Immuno-Enzymatic technique (ELISA) was used to test for anti-HCV antibodies.

Results: In the course of our work, out of 3,000 samples taken from patients admitted to health facilities, 78 cases tested positive for the anti-HCV antibody, representing a carriage rate of 2.6%. Females were the most affected, with 50 positive cases (1.67%). The 31-40 age group had the highest anti-HCV antibody carriage rate, at 0.70%.

Conclusion: All socio-professional groups are affected by this infection, but to varying degrees. Despite our efforts, hepatitis C virus infection remains a major concern, as there is currently no vaccine and existing treatments are expensive and inaccessible to middle-income countries.

Keywords: *Virus; Hepatitis C; anti-HCV Ab; elisa; Kindia.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Hepatitis C is an inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis C virus (HCV) [1,2].

The hepatitis C virus, considered before its discovery in 1989 as non-A, non-B hepatitis, is responsible for liver lesions of varying severity from one individual to another, and can progress slowly to cirrhosis and then adenocarcinoma of the liver [3,4,5]. The question of the source of HCV infection in humans and the origin of the divergence between genotypes remains highly debated. The latest scientific developments concerning these Hepaciviruses support the hypothesis of a zoonotic origin, most likely from rodents or bats, which diversified in humans [6,7].

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is the cause of a major burden on populations in many countries. In the 20th century, its spread in humans was potentiated by the emergence of parenteral use for medical purposes or drug injections as well as its asymptomatic nature in the acute phase [7].

For the same reasons, the epidemiology of the infection remains relatively poorly understood today. Data on the prevalence and, even more so, the incidence of HCV infection are lacking in many countries, particularly middle- and low-income countries on the African continent [8,9]. Despite these shortcomings, global HCV seroprevalence has been estimated at 170 million chronic carriers, or around 3% of the

world's population. Africa as a whole could [10,11].

The global prevalence of hepatitis C is estimated at 1%, with a variable distribution in different regions of the world, sometimes even within the same country [12].

Prevalence is high in sub-Saharan Africa; the only review focusing on sub-Saharan Africa was carried out in 2002 by Madhava et al, with an estimated 18 million individuals carrying anti-HCV antibodies [13]. In Guinea, according to studies carried out by Diakité F. et al. in 2019 in the Nephrology Department of the Donka National Hospital among patients with chronic renal failure, the seroprevalence of the hepatitis C virus was 4.61% [14].

In 2021, a study of the impact of biological diagnosis of parenteral viral hepatitis by S. Boumbaly et al. in the Republic of Guinea showed an HCV antibody carriage rate of 18% [15].

According to the Medical Department of Livi France, 2023, the risk factors for hepatitis C include:

- intravenous or intranasal drug users;
- having received a blood transfusion or organ, tissue or cell transplant before 1992;
- being a homosexual man
- have haemodialysis
- be an HIV carrier.

Initially reserved for populations at risk of infection, since 2017 systematic screening for hepatitis C has been recommended for all adults who have never been screened [8,9]. This decision was taken after it was found that 30% of patients diagnosed with hepatitis C had no risk factor.

1.1 Methods of Preventing the Virus

Prevention is based on limiting transmission by :

- Using condoms during sexual intercourse.
- Using single-use injection equipment for intravenous drug users.
- Using single-use or sterile equipment for tattoos and piercings.
- Not sharing toiletries that may come into contact with blood: razors, nail scissors, nail clippers, toothbrushes.
- Screening blood donations [16].

2. METHODOLOGY

The urban commune of Kindia was used as the study area. This prospective and descriptive study was conducted at the Institut de Recherche en Biologie Appliquée de Guinée (IRBAG) from June to December 2022. The biomaterial consists of 3,000 blood samples taken from patients attending consultations at health facilities. The Immuno-Enzymatic technique

(ELISA) was used to test for anti-HCV antibodies.

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of HCV seroprevalence in the urban commune of Kindia

| Results | Staff | Percentage |
|-----------|-------|------------|
| Positives | 78 | 2.60 |
| Negatives | 2922 | 97.40 |
| Total | 3000 | 100 |

Out of a sample of 3000 samples, 78 were positive with a carrying rate of 2.60% against 2922 negative samples or 97.40%.

Table 2. Distribution of positive cases by sex

| Sexes | Effectifs | Positive cases | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|----------------|------------|
| Male | 1160 | 28 | 0.93 |
| Feminine | 1840 | 50 | 1.67 |
| Total | 3000 | 78 | 2.60 |

From this table, we see that the female sex is the most affected with 50 cases or 1.67%. On the other hand, the male sex, being the least infected, totals 28 cases for a percentage of 0.93. This discrepancy could be explained by the fact that there is more sampling among women.

Table 3. Distribution of the population by age group

| Age Groups | Staff | Positive cases | Percentage | IC _{95%} |
|------------|-------|----------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1 à 10 | 1448 | 7 | 0.23 | [0.20-0.26] |
| 11 à 20 | 240 | 5 | 0.17 | [0.11-0.23] |
| 21 à 30 | 360 | 14 | 0.47 | [0.42-0.52] |
| 31 à 40 | 486 | 21 | 0.70 | [0.65-0.75] |
| 41 à 50 | 224 | 13 | 0.43 | [0.36-0.50] |
| 51 à 60 | 153 | 10 | 0.33 | [0.25-0.41] |
| Age > 60 | 89 | 8 | 0.26 | [0.15-0.37] |
| Total | 3000 | 78 | 2.60 | [2.58-2.62] |

Table 4. Distribution of positive cases by socio-professional category

| Professions | Staff | Positive cases | % | IC _{95%} |
|---------------------|-------|----------------|------|-------------------|
| Students | 923 | 5 | 0.16 | [0.05-0.27] |
| Officials | 201 | 13 | 0.43 | [0.36-0.50] |
| Health Workers | 72 | 4 | 0.13 | [0.01-0.25] |
| Traders | 307 | 16 | 0.53 | [0.47-0.59] |
| Military | 25 | 5 | 0.16 | [0.04-0.36] |
| Farmers | 180 | 8 | 0.26 | [0.19-0.33] |
| Without professions | 1292 | 27 | 0.90 | [0.87-0.93] |
| Total | 3000 | 78 | 2.60 | [2.58-2.62] |

This table shows that people aged 31 to 40 have the highest rate of HCV antibody carriage at 0.7%, followed by those aged 41 to 50, 21 to 30 and 51 to 60 with 0.47, 0.43 and 0.33 respectively.

Table 5. Distribution of positive cases by health facility

| Health facilities | Staff | Positive cases | Parentage |
|--------------------------|-------|----------------|-----------|
| Kindia Regional Hospital | 1300 | 29 | 0.97 |
| Manquepas Health Center | 432 | 11 | 0.37 |
| Cacia Health Center | 340 | 09 | 0.30 |
| Bibane Health Center | 277 | 10 | 0.33 |
| Wondy Health Center | 353 | 14 | 0.47 |
| Kénendé Health Center | 298 | 05 | 0.17 |
| Total | 3000 | 78 | 2.60 |

From this table, we note that non-occupational patients occupy the first place in the rate of antibody carriage against Viral Hepatitis C (0.90%), followed by those who practice commerce and civil servants with 0.53 and 0.43% respectively.

It was found that patients seen at the Regional Hospital were more affected by this viral disease because of the greater number of patients and the existence of a viral infection screening centre than health facilities, with 0.97%, and the lowest infection rate was recorded at the Kénendé health centre (0.17%).

3. DISCUSSION

In this work, after analysis by the ELISA method, 78 out of 3000 patients sampled tested positive, i.e. a carriage rate of anti-HCV antibodies of 2.6%.

This result is higher than those found in 2021 by TAL BALDE et al. in Guinea who reported that HCV antibodies were detected in only one case, 0.32%.

It is also higher than those found in 2014 by Gower et al. in Libya (1.2%), South Africa (1.7%), Madagascar (1.2%), Algeria (1.4%), and Ethiopia (1.3%).

The same trend was observed in 2015 by Julien Riou et al. (1.5%), Mali (1.9%) and Senegal (1%).

On the other hand, our result is lower than those found in 2004 by Tangara Omar and Hamid Traoré in Mali with 4.9% and 4.8% respectively. Similarly, it is lower than those found by Gower et al. in 2014 in Egypt 14.7%, Cameroon 11.6% and Nigeria 8.4%.

However, our result is comparable to that obtained in 2015 by Julien Riou et al. in Côte d'Ivoire 2.2%.

In the course of our work, it appears that the carrying rate for women is higher than for men, i.e. 1.67% compared to 0.93%. These results are contrary to those found by Diakité F. et al. in 2019 with a carrying rate of 3.07% in men compared to 1.54% in women.

The same trend was found by S. Boumbaly et al. in 2021 with 19.06% in males versus 15.75% in females.

According to age groups, our results show that seroprevalence is predominant among adults (0.70%) for the 31 to 40 age group followed by the 21 to 30 age group (0.47%). Our results are significantly lower than those found by Kalla N. et al. in 2020 who indicated that the 60-69 age group is the most affected with 40.70%, the seroprevalence in this age group is 12.79% [17].

4. CONCLUSION

In the course of our work, 3000 patients received for consultation in health facilities in the urban municipality of Kindia were sampled. After diagnosis by ELISA, 78 cases were positive, i.e. an anti-HCV antibody carriage rate of 2.6%. The predominance of viral hepatitis C seroprevalence is female in the urban commune of Kindia with 1.67%.

Patients between 31 and 40 years of age have the highest rate of HCV antibody carriage at 0.70%.

It appears that all socio-professional strata are affected by this infection, but to different degrees; The most affected among them are patients who do not have a defined professional situation, followed by those who work in commerce with 0.90% and 0.53% respectively.

Despite efforts, hepatitis C virus infection remains a major concern as no vaccine exists to

date and existing treatments are expensive and very inaccessible for middle-income countries.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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