Do Hemodialysed Patients Contribute to the Spread of HCV Infection?

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Dear Sir,

After blood transfusion [1] and parenteral drug use [2], the sexual activity is recognized as a major risk factor in the transmission of HCV infection in the general population [3]. However, studies carried out in a population with high prevalence for HCV infection, such as drug abusers [4] and hemofilic patients [5], do not confirm this opinion. We investigated 51 hemodialyzed patients, 40 males and 11 females, aged 55 years (range 25-76), mean dialytic age 70 months (range 6-222), and their sexual partners for HCV infection. 22 patients, 14 males and 8 females, aged 51.9 years (range 25-70), mean dialytic age 88 months (range 6-222), and 3 of 22 partners resulted HCV positive (however, 2 were husband and wife, both dialyzed and polytrans-fused, the 3rd partner did not share any risk factor). Indeed, only 10 of 22 HCV-positive patients had a normal sexual activity, including the patient with positive partner. Among the 29 HCV-negative patients, 1 partner resulted HCV positive with no known risk factor.

We conclude that the dialyzed population, despite its high prevalence for HCV infection, does not seem to play any role in the spread of infection either by sexual or household contact, 'person-to-person'. The abnormalities in its sexual function should be taken into account.

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