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## Prevalence, infectivity and associated risk factors of Hepatitis B virus among pregnant women in Yirgalem Hospital, Southern Ethiopia: Implication of screening to control mother-to-child transmission?

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**Background:** A hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) and Hepatitis B e antigen (HBeAg) positive mother has up to a 90% likelihood of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of hepatitis B virus (HBV) to newborns in the absence of any prophylaxis or antiviral therapy utilization. However, routine antenatal screening and intervention strategies are not yet practiced in Ethiopia. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the prevalence, infectivity and associated risk factors of HBV among pregnant women.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from October 2015 to August 2016 in Yirgalem Hospital. A total of 475 pregnant women were recruited consecutively. Data on socio-demography and potential risk factors were collected using a structured questionnaire. In addition, blood samples were tested for HBsAg. Positive HBsAg samples were tested for HBeAg using a commercially available strip test. The status of HIV was collected from the records. The data were entered and analyzed using SPSS version 20 statistical

package.

**Results:** Among the total study participants 35.4% were aware of MTCT, 15.6% were previously screened and only 0.6% had taken full dose vaccine for HBV. Thirty-four women (7.2%) were HBsAg-positive, of whom 27(76.5%) were positive to HBeAg. The prevalence of HIV infection was 10.1% (48/475). Overall, HBV/HIV co-infection rate was 2.1% (10/475). Women with a history of multiple sexual partners (aOR=2.92, 95%CI=1.19-7.16) and being HIV positive (aOR= 4.44, 95%CI=1.96-10.08) were the only independent predictors of HBsAg positivity.

**Conclusions:** High prevalence of HBsAg and coexisting with HBeAg, in addition to low awareness and practice suggests that MTCT might be the prevailing mode of HBV transmission in the study area. Thus screening of all pregnant women and provision of health education about the risk factors, the mode of transmission and prevention is recommended.

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