

Hepatitis E virus: epidemiology, diagnosis, pathology and prevention.

Acharya, KS; Panda, SK

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Abstract

HEV, a positive stranded RNA virus, is responsible for most of the epidemics of hepatitis in the developing world and is transmitted through contaminated water. It is the major aetiological agent for acute hepatitis and acute liver failure in endemic regions. It causes severe liver disease among pregnant females and patients with chronic liver disease. Serodiagnosis of HEV is now available and should be used routinely for diagnosis. The available evidence suggests that HEV may also be transmitted parenterally as well as vertically particularly in endemic areas.

Experimental studies suggest that an HEV vaccine is a distinct possibility in the near future. In the absence of an effective vaccine, public health measures such as clean water supply, improved sanitation and public education are the major tools to prevent HEV epidemics in developing nations.