Cross Hospital will dissociate itself from these ideas and continue to be one of the United Kingdom’s leading departments.

Reference

Yours faithfully,
R. S. Morton

TO THE EDITOR, British Journal of Venereal Diseases

Hepatitis B antigen and antibody in a male homosexual population

Sir,

Coleman et al. (1977) are to be congratulated on their detailed study of the incidence of hepatitis B antigen and antibody in the serum of 600 male homosexual patients, but it is difficult to accept their conclusion that there was little correlation between these indices of infection by the hepatitis B virus and a previous history of hepatitis, jaundice, or liver disease. The figures which they give can be compounded into the following table, which demonstrates a very strong correlation indeed between serological evidence of hepatitis B infection and a positive clinical history:

| History of |  |  |  |  |
| jaundice, | hepatitis, | or | liver | disease |
| HBs Ag or | IOEP-detectable | HBs Ab | 10 | 54 | 64 |
| Neither | 18 | 518 | 536 |
| Total | 28 | 572 | 600 |

$\chi^2 = 19.34 \quad p < 0.0005$

Furthermore, the authors state that the sera of 85 patients negative for HBs Ag and HBs Ab by routine methods were tested for antibody by radioimmunoassay (RIA) and three of them were found to have both antibody and a history of jaundice or hepatitis. If this proportion is representative of the whole series, it follows that among the 536 patients who were negative for HBs Ag and immunosmelectrophoresis—detectable HBs Ab there may well have been as many as 19 in whom the presence of RIA detectable HBs Ab coincided with a history of jaundice or hepatitis.

These 19, together with the 10 patients with a positive history and positive routine tests are sufficient to account for all the 28 patients in the series with a history of jaundice or hepatitis, so that it is likely that serological evidence of hepatitis B infection would have been found in every patient with a positive clinical history if the whole series had been tested for antibody by RIA. Finally, if the results of RIA testing of part of the series are extrapolated to the whole series it may be calculated that 42% of these men, almost all of whom had in all probability been exposed to the virus, probably had serological evidence of infection, and 11% of these had had a clinically apparent infection. This shows the extent to which the virus is dangerous, at any rate when acquired by homosexual means, and this to me is the main interest of this informative series.

Reference

Yours faithfully,
P. H. Renton

National Blood Transfusion Service, Roby Street, Manchester M1 3BP

Notice

MSSVD Student Prize

The MSSVD Student Prize competition in 1977 appears on page 160. This was the first year of this competition. The judges had great difficulty in choosing one of the seven entries, but used the following criteria:

1. The observations on which the report was based, appeared to have been made by the entrant alone.
2. The methods used to make the observations were of a high standard.
3. The report was clearly and concisely written.

It is hoped that by publishing these criteria future entrants will be helped.