

The health needs among hepatitis B virus carriers lived in rural areas: from the health promoting perspectives

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INTRODUCTION

Liver cancer poses a significant risk for individuals with chronic viral hepatitis and those who engage in substance use, such as alcohol consumption or exposure to other inflammatory substances. Community health screening initiatives can enhance case identification and facilitate referral for further treatment. However, many rural residents may lack understanding of the connection between hepatitis and lifestyle factors, particularly individuals carrying hepatitis B virus (HBV) infections. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate their self-care practices and health-related behaviors.

METHOD

A community-based, cross-sectional study was conducted between March and December 2023 in the western coastal region of Taiwan. A sample of 200 individuals with HBV infection was randomly selected from a community health screening to investigate the current health needs of individuals with HBV in the specific rural area. The blood samples and biomarkers were collected and examined in the central laboratory in collaboration with the local hospital. A structured questionnaire concerning lifestyle information and perceptions of HBV was administered through face-to-face interviews. Continuous variables were expressed as mean $\pm$ standard deviation and analyzed using independent samples t-tests, while categorical variables were presented as frequencies and percentages and analyzed using the Chi-squared test. An alpha level of 0.05 was considered to indicate statistical significance.

This study received approval from the institutional review board of the research ethics committee (IRB No: 202000109B0C101) before commencement. Each participant was informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and provided informed consent by signing a consent form voluntarily.



RESULTS

Among the 15 health-promoting behaviors, many individuals with HBV exhibited health-related behaviors rated between “never” and “occasionally” in 10 categories. In terms of dietary habits: 43.5% (n=87) rarely or occasionally consumed more than one and a half bowls of vegetables daily (equivalent to three servings); 48% (n=96) rarely or occasionally consumed one bowl of fruit daily (equivalent to two servings); and 46.5% (n=93) rarely or occasionally drank over 2000cc of water daily. Regarding exercise: 65% (n=130) rarely or occasionally engaged in regular exercise three times a week for 30 minutes. Deviant behaviors included smoking (16.5%, n=33) and alcohol consumption (15.5%, n=31), with only 47.5% reporting a diagnosis of HBV. Therefore, enhancing awareness of HBV, preventing its complications, and promoting self-care behaviors are crucial for influencing the progression of the disease.

CONCLUSIONS

This study utilizes community health screening to investigate self-care behaviors related to hepatitis B (HBV) and health-related behaviors. The findings suggest that increasing awareness of HBV is crucial for preventing complications and promoting self-care behaviors that significantly impact the progression of the disease.

Therefore, through practices such as adopting a healthy diet and nutrition, engaging in regular physical activity, personal health management, lifestyle improvements, and interpersonal exercises, one can enhance health care, prevention, chronic disease management, shared decision-making between patients and healthcare providers, strengthen tobacco control, and national nutrition, among others. Continuous efforts to create a healthy living environment and city, along with collaboration among family, community, and medical institutions, are essential for empowering and enabling individuals. This, in turn, can contribute to preventing the deterioration of hepatitis B, reducing the occurrence of cirrhosis, and lowering the risk of liver cancer.

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