Letter to the editor

Booster HBV vaccination; is it really necessary?

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To the editor,

I read with interest the published article by El-Sayed et al.[1] in your journal recently. Soon after introducing recombinant hepatitis B virus (HBV) vaccine, universal neonatal vaccination became the cornerstone of the preventive measures for control of HBV infection[2]. By 2006 more than 177 out of 193 member states of the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced HBV vaccination in their national infant immunization programs[2]. The measurement of post vaccination serum level of anti-hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs) is the only simple test available to predict the waning of protection and help plan for the administration of a booster dose especially in high risk groups[3]. A level of 10 IU/L of anti HBsAb is usually considered as a protective level against future infections. The reported rate of persistent protective level of anti HBsAb titers varied from 33% up to 79%, at least 5 years after vaccination[2].

It is obvious that the percentage of negative anti HBsAb after 10 years would be more than that in 5 years after HBV vaccination. The main question is about the rate of HBs Ag seroconversion in this group, which is confirmed to be decreasing significantly in all studies. Furthermore, the more coverage of HBV vaccination especially in rural areas is a key point in this achievement. Fortunately the anti HBsAb after vaccination was significantly high in most children especially in group A after 5 years of HBV vaccination.

Another point is that more females were included in children over 10 years old, which limits the conclusion in table 3 regarding higher level of HBsAb in males. Furthermore, most studies have found that there were no gender differences in the immunological response to HBV vaccine[3]. And finally I would like to emphasize that due to an increase in anti HBsAb level in most of the children after receiving the booster of HBV vaccine, I agree with the authors that there is no need for HBV vaccination as booster in children after completing HBV vaccination during infantile period.

REFERENCES

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