Hepatitis B immunisation - what are we doing for workers who do not respond to a primary course of the vaccine?

Dr David S Mallett, 2007

ABSTRACT

A number of demographic groups are regarded as being at increased risk of contracting Hepatitis B, including some groups of workers. This risk can be reduced by adopting safe behaviours and working practices. The risk can also be reduced by immunisation with Hepatitis B vaccines. For clinicians, one of the remaining unanswered practical questions relating to Hepatitis B vaccination is whether or not there might be an optimum strategy for managing the 10% of adult persons who will be ‘non-responders’ to a primary course of the vaccine.

The aim of this study is to undertake a cross sectional survey of physicians working in the UK to identify, for the first time, the strategies that are actually being used to deal with (otherwise healthy) adult vaccine non-responders. This dissertation also examines the small number of studies that have been published in peer reviewed journals relating to the management of non-responders and highlights areas where further study is still required.

The results show variations in practice within the UK with regards to the daily practice of Hepatitis B vaccination. There are also a number of uncertainties and difficulties in terminology that appear related to the Department of Health Guidelines being out of step with international opinion. This study has also found a lack of strong evidence that will inform us of how best to treat people who are non-responders to a single course of the vaccine.