THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRONIC VIRUS C INFECTION AND AUTOIMMUNE HEPATITIS

ESSAY

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BY

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INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF WORK

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Distinguishing autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) from chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection has previously relied on the relative rarity of autoantibodies in patients with HCV infection. However, recent findings that a high proportion of patients with AIH have evidence of HCV infection have raised doubts about this criterion ***(Johnson and Mc Farlane, 1993)***.Moreover, it is now well known that HCV chronic liver disease may be associated with various immunological disorders in the form of type-II mixed cryoglobulinaemia (CG), serum anti-GOR antibodies, serum anti-liver/kidney microsomal antibodies type-I (anti-LKM-1), serum anti-nuclear antibodies (ANA) or anti-smooth muscles antibodies (ASMA), autoimmune thyroiditis, Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and skin diseases. The actual prevalence and pathogenetic role of these disorders in patients with chronic HCV are still unclear . On the other hand, the differentiation between both disorders is important for selection of patients for anti-viral, i.e., interferon (IFN) or immunosuppressive therapy.

Thus, the aim of this study is to elucidate the overlap between the two disorders in terms of clinical, biochemical, pathological, and immunological abnormalities of both.

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