What is already known on this topic

Obesity in British children is increasing—prevalence rose by 150% between 1984 and 1998. Lay definitions of ideal weight and overweight deviate from clinical definitions in adults.

What this study adds

Many parents are unaware, and thus unconcerned, that their children are overweight.

Contributors: AJ designed the study, collected the data, analysed the results, and wrote the paper. LV supervised the study design and edited drafts of the paper. BM and SA helped with data management and statistical analyses. TW helped with interpretation of the results and is director of the EarlyBird Study. TW is guarantor.

Incidence of hepatitis C virus and HIV among new injecting drug users in London: prospective cohort study

Ali Judd, Matthew Hickman, Steve Jones, Tamara McDonald, John V Parry, Gerry V Stimson, Andrew J Hall

In England, the low prevalence of HIV among injecting drug users during the 1990s was attributed in part to the introduction of harm reduction interventions in the late 1980s. Also, the prevalence of hepatitis C virus in the late 1990s was thought to be relatively low compared with other countries, at around 40% overall and 13% among those who had been injecting drugs for less than six years. We carried out a prospective cohort study of new injecting drug users in London to estimate the incidence of hepatitis C virus and HIV.

Participants, methods, and results

In 2001, we recruited from community settings mainly those who had been injecting drugs for less than six years and the median frequency of injection was 2.5 times a day. Most (71%) mainly injected opiates, although just over half (53%) had injected cocaine or crack in the previous year. Participants reported high levels of injecting risk behaviour, with 24% at baseline reporting injecting in the previous four weeks with needles and syringes used by someone else, and 53% sharing injecting paraphernalia. The baseline prevalence of antibody to hepatitis C virus was 41.8 cases per 100 person years to follow up for sociodemographic characteristics or nalia. The baseline prevalence of antibody to hepatitis C virus was 41.8 cases per 100 person years and of antibody to HIV was 4.4% (table). The overall follow up rate was 70%, and we found no difference between those followed up and those lost to follow up for sociodemographic characteristics or injecting risk behaviour. The incidence of antibody to hepatitis C virus was 4.8 cases per 100 person years and of antibody to HIV was 3.4 cases per 100 person years (see table).

Comment

The incidence of hepatitis C virus in England is high and of HIV higher than expected. These findings are corroborated by ongoing surveillance data, and suggest that transmission may have recently increased. In England, the low prevalence of HIV among injecting drug users over and above any increase in protective interventions. Recent studies suggest that current
Infecting drug users are at high risk of acquiring HIV, hepatitis C virus, and other bloodborne infections. Current drug policy is failing to maintain historical levels of protection from bloodborne viruses among this high risk group.

What is already known on this topic

The incidences of hepatitis C virus and HIV among new injecting drug users in London are 41.8 and 3.4 cases per 100 person years, respectively.

What this study adds

Innovative strategies are required, specific to hepatitis C virus and to HIV, to change behaviour and to deliver health education messages and harm reduction strategies early enough to make a difference.

We thank the interviewers and participants; Greg Holloway for his significant contribution to the fieldwork; Sheila Bird, David Goldberg, Adrian Rention, Tim Rhodes, Avril Taylor, and advisory group members for their ongoing advice. Matthew Hickman is funded through a Department of Health Public Health Career Scientist award. The Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour is core funded by the Department of Health.

Prevalence and incidence of hepatitis C virus and HIV antibody among new injecting drug users in London, 2001-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Viral antibodies</th>
<th>No positive/total</th>
<th>Prevalence (95% CI)</th>
<th>No of seroconversions/total (mean follow up time)</th>
<th>Incidence rate per 100 person years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis C virus</td>
<td>18/428</td>
<td>4.3 (3.8 to 4.8)</td>
<td>5/193 (372 days)</td>
<td>41.8 (31.4 to 54.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>19/428</td>
<td>4.2 (2.5 to 6.6)</td>
<td>9/273 (360 days)</td>
<td>3.4 (1.8 to 6.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contributors: AJ, MH, SJ, JP, GVS, and AJH designed and conducted the cohort study. TMcD conducted the laboratory testing, overseen by JVP. AJ undertook the statistical analysis; she is guarantor for the paper. All authors contributed to the writing of the paper.

Funding: Policy research programme of the Department of Health. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of Health. The funding source had minor involvement in the study design, through attendance at steering group meetings.

Competing interests: None declared.

Ethical approval: This study received ethical approval from Hammersmith, Queen Charlotte’s and Chelsea and Acton Hospitals research ethics committee.

Averting a change to the date of the royal succession

I will be 90 years old in 2005 and have a very clear memory of an episode which took place at my home in Mansfield in 1926 when I was 11. My father, H.I. Flint, was a very cautious man. In those days, any medical man who advertised was liable to be struck off the register. My father was a very cautious man. In those days, any medical man who advertised was liable to be struck off the register. My father was a very cautious man. In those days, any medical man who advertised was liable to be struck off the register. My father was a very cautious man. In those days, any medical man who advertised was liable to be struck off the register. My father was a very cautious man. In those days, any medical man who advertised was liable to be struck off the register. My father was a very cautious man. In those days, any medical man who advertised was liable to be struck off the register. My father was a very cautious man. 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