

Low prevalence of liver-kidney microsomal autoantibodies of type 1 (LKM1) in hepatitis C seropositive subjects on Crete, Greece

ABSTRACT

Autoantibodies, mainly ANA and ASMA are very common in HCV seropositive patients from Crete. By contrast LKM1 autoantibodies are exceptionally rare in these patients.

INTRODUCTION

Background Hepatitis C, a serious health problem in Greece, is particularly common on the island of Crete, where a high prevalence of antibodies against hepatitis C (anti-HCV) has recently been reported. Previous studies have demonstrated that serum antinuclear (ANA) and smooth muscle (ASMA) antibodies are common in anti-HCV subjects. In most cases ANA are of the speckled type and ASMA exhibit the "vasal" (SMA-V) pattern. Moreover, LKM1, an autoantibody reacting with liver and kidney microsomes, was also reported to be associated with HCV chronic hepatitis. Unfortunately, similar studies are not available in Greece. The present study was therefore designed to establish the prevalence of serum autoantibodies in HCV seropositive patients in Crete. This article reports the findings in patients with chronic hepatitis C attending a number of primary and secondary health care units on the island.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions In conclusion, serum autoantibodies, namely ANA and ASMA, are frequently found in HCV seropositive subjects from Crete. By contrast, LKM1 antibodies are virtually absent. General Practitioners and Hospital Physicians in Crete should be aware that these antibodies are more likely to be associated with HCV infection than true autoimmune hepatitis.