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PORNTIP KHEMNAK: HEPATITIS C VIRUS SEROPREVALENCE AND RISK FACTORS AMONG PATIENTS ATTENDING SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND AIDS CONTROL SECTION, REGIONAL CENTER ,SARABURI.

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At present , hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is increasing in some risk groups including injected drug users and female sex workers. This study attempts to determine the prevalence of HCV infection and risk factors in patients attending sexually transmitted disease (STD) clinics. Two hundred patients attending Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS Control Section, Regional Center 2, Saraburi during August to December 1997 were interviewed and their blood specimens were collected for testing anti-HCV antibody by Chemiluminescent technique . After the laboratory result, the studied patients were divided into 2 groups : anti-HCV positive and anti-HCV negative group. The studied variables of two groups were analysed for identifying risk factors of HCV infection by Odds Ratio and X^2 – test. For qualitative study, 10 anti-HCV positive and 10 anti-HCV negative patients were randomly selected for in-depth interview. The results showed that the prevalence of HCV infection in studied patients was 6.00%. The prevalence in patients with tattooing or patients having sexual relations two or more times per month was higher than in those without tattooing or those having sexual relations less than 2 times [$p < 0.05$]. Quantitative risk analysis found that domicile was a significant risk factor [OR = 3.35, 95%CI=1.0028-11.2237]. Other factors including tattooing, types of STDs and history of having sexual relations two or more times per month might be risk factors because of the high Odds ratio [OR=3.11,4.94 and 4.90, respectively],but these were not significant. However, data from qualitative study revealed that domicile, tattooing, injected drug use, history of blood transfusion, history of gonorrhoea, having sexual relations two or more times per month and extramarital sex relations without using condom were potential risk factors of HCV infection in this group.