Letter to Editor

RECOMMENDATION FOR HEPATITIS - B VACCINATION

The need for immunoprophylaxis against hepatitis-B was accepted in principle by Armed Forces almost a decade back [1]. However, no concrete step towards formulation or practical implementation of a central policy has been made since then. Today, only post exposure prophylaxis is being given in bigger hospitals of Armed Forces on merits of individual cases. The experience in USA has shown that selective high risk adult immunization fails to lower the prevalence of this disease, which in fact has been reported to be rising [2].

It is widely believed that high cost of vaccination is the main stumbling block in recommending it universally. Studies in our Armed Forces have shown that such vaccination is cost effective [3]. Similar studies from Western countries also echo the same fact [4,5] and suggest that universal neonatal immunization against HBV infection will be an economical proposition. Several countries in South East Asia have already included vaccination against HBV in their Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI). The Global Advisory Group of FPI has recommended incorporation of HBV vaccination into infant immunization programmes of countries with a high endemicity of infection (> 8% chronic HBV infection) by 1995 and in all countries by 1997 [2]. It remains

to be seen how long our health planners take to realise the requirement of vaccination against HBV infection.

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