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## INTRODUCTION

Hepatitis C, a communicable (contagious) disease of the liver, caused by hepatitis C virus (HCV). The term "hepatitis" means inflammation of the liver; HCV is one of several viruses in the hepatitis family. If the liver becomes inflamed, it cannot function properly, and remove harmful material from the blood or convert food into energy. (*Habib, et al;2003*).

Viral hepatitis C is a global public health problem, and has been considered one of the major challenges in the third millennium (*Abou Saleh ,et al;2008*). The sero-prevalence rate is about 1% in western countries and North America, 3-4% in some Mediterranean and Asian countries and up to 10-20% in parts of central Africa and Egypt (*Moataza ; 2009*).

The prevalence ranges from 10% to 20% of the general population, and rural populations show a higher prevalence than urban ones. (*Abdel-Wahab,et al;1994* ). The recently released Egyptian Demographic Health Survey(EDHS) tested a representative sample of the entire country for HCV antibody. The sample included both urban and rural population and included all governorates in Egypt. Over 11,000 individuals were tested.

The overall prevalence(percentage of people) positive for antibody to HCV was 14.7% (*El-Zanaty,et al;2009* ).

The infection with the HCV is the leading cause of chronic hepatitis worldwide, progressing to liver cirrhosis in approximately 20% of patients after 10 years and to hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) in a subset of them with a yearly incidence of 3% (*El-Awady 2009*).

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Hepatitis C is transmitted primarily through contact with infected blood. In Egypt, the major route of exposure appears to be due to injection therapy and inadequate infection control practices. In addition to blood transfusions prior to 1994 ( *Mohamed, et al; 2004*). It is not spread through sneezing, coughing, food or water, or casual contact. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C and the only way to prevent it is to avoid exposure .

The current recommended treatment for chronic hepatitis C infection is combination therapy with pegylated interferon (pegIFN) and ribavirin. (*Strader, et al; 2004 , Dienstag, et al; 2006, Sherman, et al; 2007*).

Organ shortage remains a major problem in liver transplantation for which the number of patients on the waiting list is superior to the number of liver grafts harvested each year(*Pruvot, et al; 2009* ).