



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Quarterly Report Hepatitis C Notifications Q4, 2005



Health Protection Surveillance Centre

Summary

There were 337 notifications of hepatitis C in the fourth quarter of 2005. Sixty-eight percent of cases were male and the number of cases was highest in the 25-34 year age group for both males and females. Seventy-five percent of cases were reported by the HSE-ER. No risk factor information is currently available routinely for hepatitis C.

Introduction

Hepatitis C became a notifiable disease under an amendment to the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981, implemented on 1st January 2004 (S.I 707 of 2003). This amendment also requires laboratory directors to report cases of notifiable diseases identified in their laboratories. Previously, hepatitis C may have been notified as viral hepatitis type unspecified. These changes have had a positive impact on the quality of information available on hepatitis C in Ireland. This is a summary of the notifications of hepatitis C made to HPSC by the HSE areas in the fourth quarter of 2005.

Results

There were 337 notifications of hepatitis C in Q4 2005. This was a slight decrease on the updated number of cases for Q3 2005 (n=376), and is similar to the number of notifications in Q4 2004 (n=331) (figure 1).

Geographic distribution

The hepatitis C numbers and rates per 100,000 population, by HSE area and quarter, are displayed in table 1 and figure 2, respectively. Seventy-five percent of the Q4 2005 cases were notified by the HSE-ER.

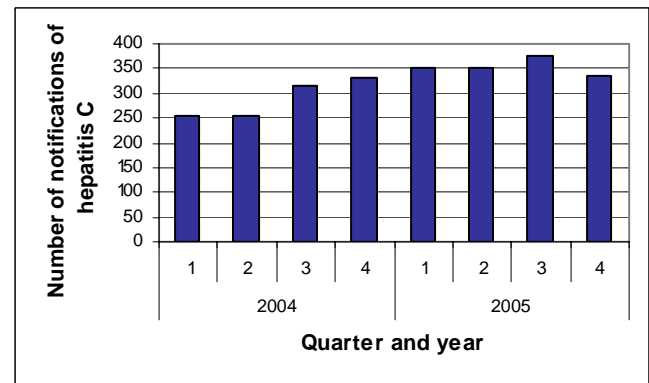


Figure 1. Number of notifications of hepatitis C per quarter, Q1 2004-Q4 2005

Table 1. Number of hepatitis C cases notified by quarter and HSE area in 2005

HSE Area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
ER	280	283	289	253
M	10	10	13	12
MW	12	7	20	15
NE	9	16	7	16
NW	2	2	6	4
SE	10	13	18	21
S	17	12	20	16
W	11	7	3	0
Total	351	350	376	337

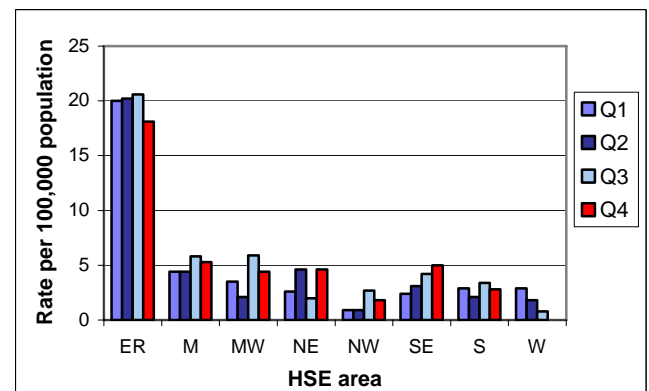


Figure 2. Rate per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications by quarter and HSE area in 2005

Age and sex

The age and sex specific rates for hepatitis C notifications in Q4 2005 are shown in figure 2. Sixty-eight percent of cases were male, 31% were female and sex was unknown for 1% of cases.

Young adults of both sexes were most affected, with 67% of cases aged between 25 and 44 years. Seventeen cases were aged between zero and nine years. This is an increase compared to Q3 2005 (n=6) and Q4 2004 (n=1).

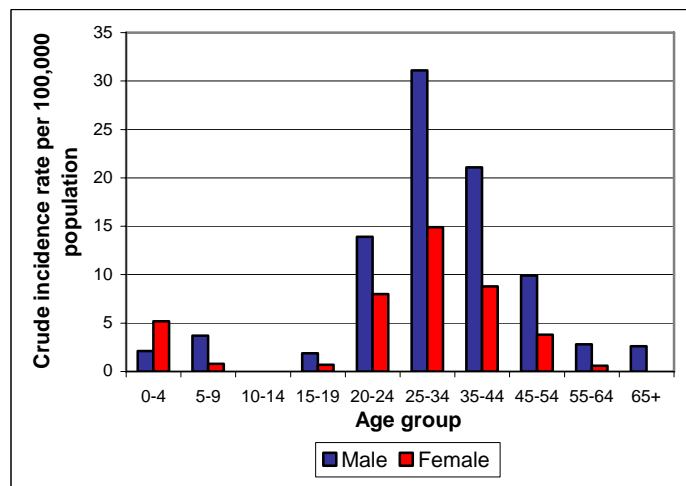


Figure 3. Age and sex specific rates per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications in Q4 2005

Discussion

Hepatitis C has only been notifiable in Ireland since January 2004, but it is evident that the incidence of hepatitis C infection in Ireland is significant.

Anecdotally, it is known that the majority of new cases are associated with injecting drug use (IDU). The high numbers among males particularly, and

young adults of both sexes, is likely to be a reflection of this.

The number of cases among infants and young children is generally low as perinatal transmission is not very efficient. Although notifications in young age groups increased in Q4, these are all retrospective notifications of cases diagnosed between 1996 and 2004.

There is, as yet, no enhanced surveillance system for hepatitis C in Ireland. Additional data, including risk factor information, is essential for the development of targeted prevention and control strategies.

Acknowledgements

HPSC would like to thank all those who provided data for this report - departments of public health, laboratories and clinicians.

Report by Niamh Murphy and Dr Lelia Thornton, 14th March 2005.

Case definition for hepatitis C¹

Clinical description In symptomatic cases, clinical picture compatible with hepatitis, i.e. discrete onset of symptoms and/or jaundice or elevated serum aminotransferase levels. Asymptomatic cases are common.

Laboratory criteria for diagnosis

One of the following:

- Detection of hepatitis C virus (HCV) specific antibodies
- Detection of HCV nucleic acid from clinical sample

Case classification

Possible: N/A

Probable: N/A

Confirmed: A case that is laboratory confirmed

1. Case definitions for notifiable diseases. Infectious Diseases (Amendment) (No. 3) regulations 2003 (SI NO. 707 of 2003). National Disease Surveillance Centre, February 2004.

All data contained in this report are provisional (CIDR accessed 6th March 2006)