



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Report on Hepatitis C Notifications in Q1 2007



Health Protection Surveillance Centre

Summary

There were 347 notifications of hepatitis C in Q1 2007. Sixty-two percent of cases were male and the number of cases was highest in the 25-34 year age group for both sexes. More than eighty percent of cases were reported by the HSE-E.

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). Prior to this, cases of hepatitis C could be notified as “viral hepatitis type unspecified”.

Results

There were 347 notifications of hepatitis C in Q1 2007. This was a significant increase compared to the updated number of cases for Q4 2006 (n=285) and Q1 2006 (n=263) (figure 1). However, fluctuations occur from quarter to quarter and this increase may be due to reporting practices.

Geographic distribution

The hepatitis C numbers and rates per 100,000 population by HSE area, for the past four quarters, are shown in table 1 and figure 2, respectively. The rates for the past four quarters have been consistently highest in the HSE-E.

The crude incidence rate for Q1 in the HSE-E was 18.5 per 100,000 population. This represented 80.1% (n=278) of the Q1 2007 cases. This was followed by a notification rate of 4.8 per 100,000 population in the HSE-NE (n=19).

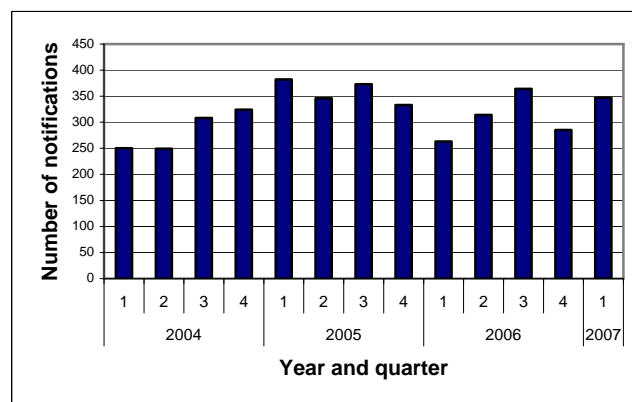


Figure 1. Number of notifications of hepatitis C per quarter, 2004-2006

Table 1. Number of hepatitis C cases notified by quarter and HSE area for the past four quarters

HSE Area	Number of notifications			
	Q2 2006	Q3 2006	Q4 2006	Q1 2007
E	216	294	225	278
M	12	12	7	6
MW	10	13	6	9
NE	10	8	6	19
NW	6	9	2	4
SE	16	8	9	10
S	20	14	15	12
W	24	6	15	9
Total	314	364	285	347

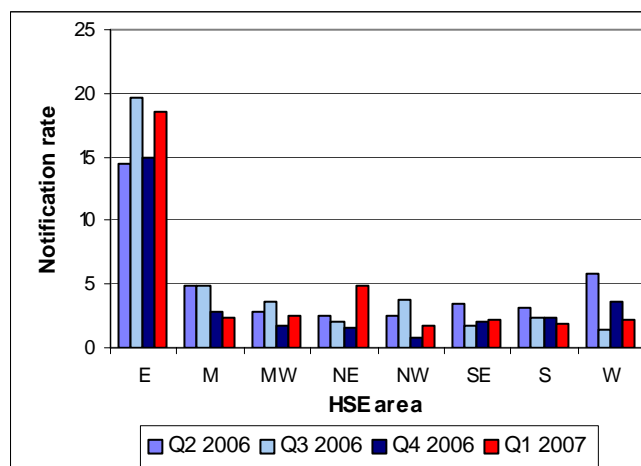


Figure 2. Quarterly rate per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications by HSE area for the past four quarters

Age and sex

The age and sex-specific rates for hepatitis C notifications in Q1 2007 are shown in figure 3. Sixty-two percent (n=215) of cases were male, 36% (n=125) were female and sex was unknown for 7 cases.

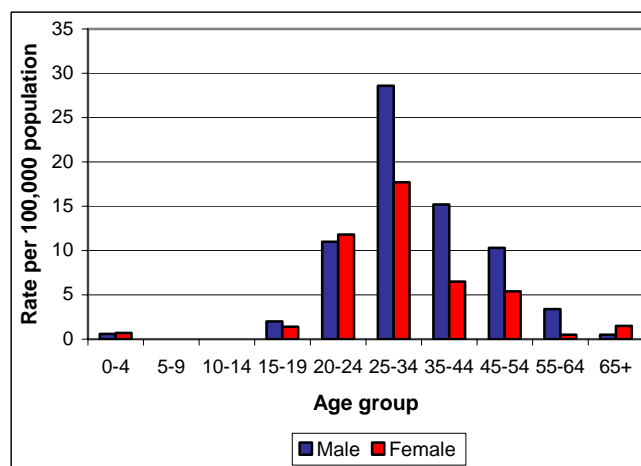


Figure 3. Age and sex specific rates per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications in Q1 2007

Young adults of both sexes were most affected, with 70% (n=242) of cases aged between 25 and 44 years and 93% (n=322) of cases aged between 20 and 54 years. The age distribution for females was slightly younger than that for males.

Discussion

The number of notifications increased in Q1 2007, but changes in hepatitis C notification rates are difficult to interpret as these may reflect testing or reporting practices rather than genuine changes in incidence.

The age and sex breakdown and geographic distribution of cases has been similar each quarter since hepatitis C became notifiable in January 2004. The majority of new cases of hepatitis C in Ireland are in young adults, with more male than female cases and notification rates are consistently highest in the HSE-E.

Enhanced surveillance fields were added to CIDR in February 2007 to capture data on risk factors. It was hoped that users would retrospectively enter enhanced data from the first of January. However, these fields were not completed for the majority of Q1 cases so it was not possible to describe risk factors for hepatitis C in this report. The number of cases notified is high so delays in entering enhanced data are likely to be due to resource constraints and data completeness will probably improve in subsequent quarters.

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, 17th May 2007.

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 16th May 2007)