



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Report on Hepatitis C Notifications in Q2 2007



Health Protection Surveillance Centre

Summary

There were 410 notifications of hepatitis C in Q2 2007. Sixty seven 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 410 notifications of hepatitis C in Q2 2007. This corresponded to a crude notification rate of 9.7 per 100,000 population and was a significant increase compared to the updated number of cases for Q1 2007 (n=342) and Q2 2006 (n=313) (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.

Eighty percent (n=331) of cases in Q2 were notified by the HSE-E. This corresponded to a crude notification rate of 22.1 per 100,000 population. This was almost three times higher than the next highest rate, which was 7.5 per 100,000 population in the HSE-M (n=19).

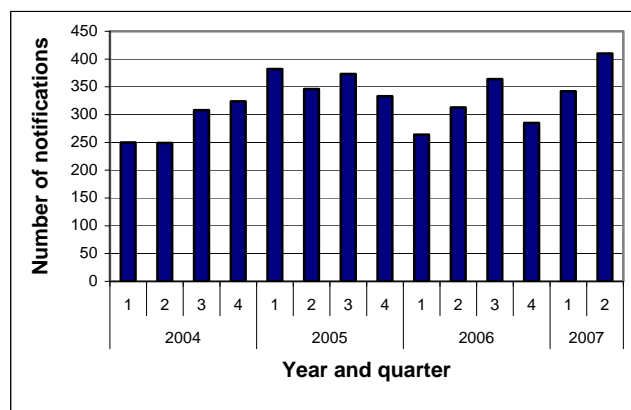


Figure 1. Number of notifications of hepatitis C per quarter, Q1 2004 to Q2 2007

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

HSE Area	Number of notifications			
	Q3 2006	Q4 2006	Q1 2007	Q2 2007
E	294	225	274	331
M	12	7	6	19
MW	13	6	9	12
NE	8	6	19	10
NW	9	2	4	5
SE	8	9	10	5
S	14	15	12	15
W	6	15	8	13
Total	364	285	342	410

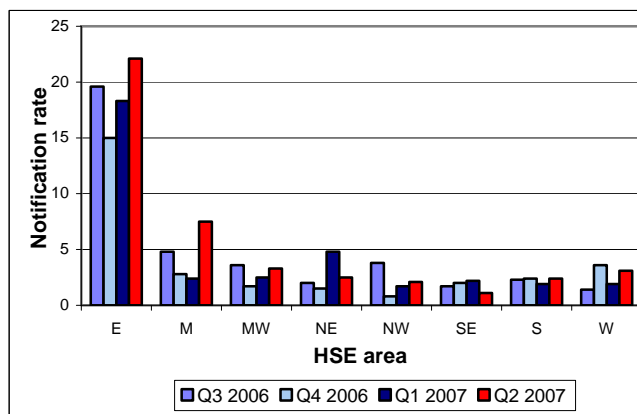


Figure 2. Quarterly rate per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications by HSE area for the past four quarters

Age and sex

The age and sex-specific rates for hepatitis C notifications in Q2 2007 are shown in figure 3. Sixty seven percent (n=274) of cases were male, 32% (n=131) were female and sex was unknown for 5 cases.

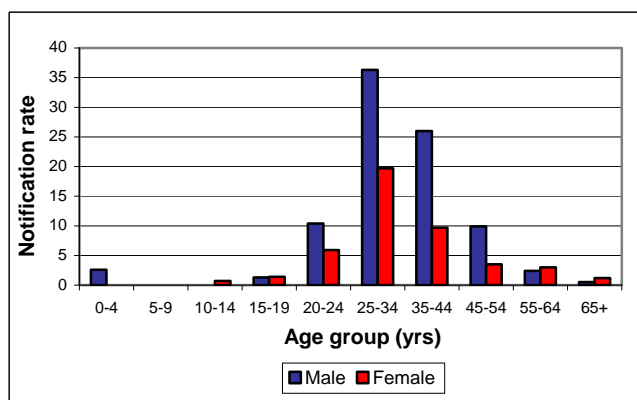


Figure 3. Age and sex specific rates per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications in Q2 2007

Young adults of both sexes were most affected, with 78% (n=320) of cases aged between 25 and 44 years and 93% (n=383) 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 Q2 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. However, risk factors were only entered for 30 cases in Q2, so it was not possible to describe these data in this report. The number of cases notified is high so delays in entering enhanced data may be due to resource constraints and data completeness may improve as data are validated on an ongoing basis.

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, 21st September 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.