



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Report on Hepatitis C Notifications in Q4 2006 & provisional annual summary 2006



Health Protection Surveillance Centre

Summary

There were 282 notifications of hepatitis C in Q4 2006. Sixty-five 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 282 notifications of hepatitis C in Q4 2006. This was a significant decrease compared to the updated number of cases for Q3 2006 (n=368) and Q4 2005 (n=333) (figure 1). However, fluctuations occur from quarter to quarter and are probably 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.

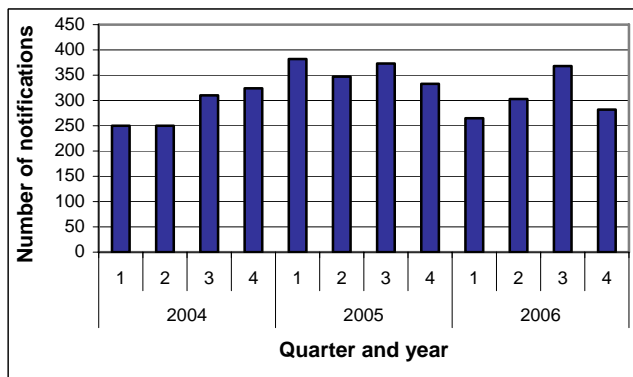


Figure 1. Number of notifications of hepatitis C per quarter, 2006

The crude incidence rate for Q4 in the HSE-E was 16.4 per 100,000 population. This represented 82% (n=230) of the Q4 2006 cases. This was followed by rates of 3.1 and 2.6 per 100,000 population in the HSE-M and HSE-S, respectively.

Table 1. Number of hepatitis C cases notified by quarter and HSE area, 2006

HSE area	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
E	191	217	302	230
M	19	13	12	7
MW	7	10	14	6
NE	13	10	8	6
NW	6	6	9	2
SE	9	16	8	9
S	20	20	14	15
W	0	11	1	7
Total	265	303	368	282

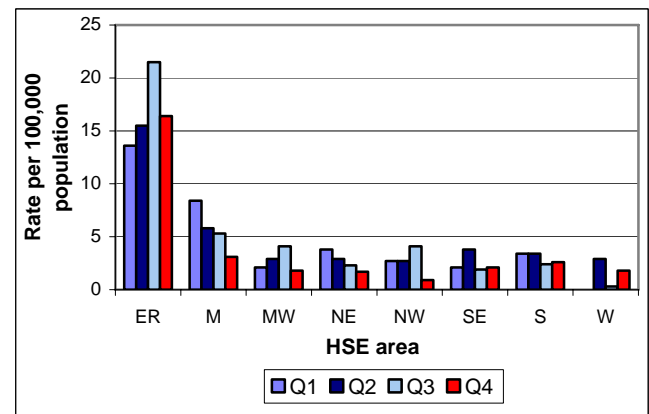


Figure 2. Rate per 100,000 population per quarter for hepatitis C notifications by HSE area in 2006

Age and sex

The age and sex-specific rates for hepatitis C notifications in Q4 2006 are shown in figure 3.

Sixty-five percent (n=183) of cases were male, 33% (n=94) were female and sex was unknown for 5 cases.

Young adults of both sexes were most affected, with 71% (n=199) of cases aged between 25 and 44 years and 91% (n=257) of cases aged between 20 and 54 years. The age distribution of males and females was similar.

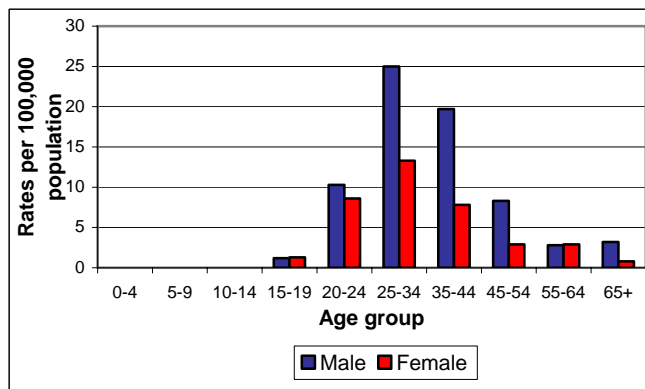


Figure 3. Age and sex specific rates per 100,000 population for hepatitis C notifications in Q4 2006

Discussion

The number of hepatitis C notifications decreased significantly in Q4 2006. 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.

Although, risk factor information is not routinely reported for hepatitis C, it is known that the vast majority of new cases of hepatitis C in Ireland are in injecting drug users.

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 8th February 2007)

Further information, is essential for the development of targeted prevention and control strategies for hepatitis C. To this end, an enhanced hepatitis C surveillance form and database have been developed and circulated to all the Departments of Public Health. The enhanced surveillance data fields will also be added to CIDR in the coming weeks.

Provisional annual summary for 2006

The hepatitis C 2006 data have not yet been validated and numbers are likely to change. However, provisional data show a 15% decrease in the number of notifications of hepatitis C in 2006, with 1,218 cases notified compared to 1,435 in 2005. This corresponds to a crude incidence rate of 31.1 per 100,000 population compared to 36.6 per 100,000 in 2005.

The age, sex and geographic distribution of cases was very similar to 2005. Males continued to predominate, with 786 male cases (65%) and 413 female cases (34%) notified. Sex was unknown for 19 cases. Eighty-one percent of cases were aged between 20 and 44 years (n=984). This was similar for males and females. Seventy-seven percent of all cases were notified by the HSE-E (n=940, rate=67 per 100,000 population).

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, 15th February 2007.