

“Making sure that people living with hepatitis B are diagnosed and receive treatment and care”

Findings from: [Systematic review of case-finding and linkage to care for individuals with HBV](#)

What was the study about?

This study looked at hepatitis B, a virus that affects the liver and can lead to serious illness such as liver cancer. The prevalence of a disease is the number of people in a population who are living with the disease. Although the UK is considered a low-prevalence country, many people living with hepatitis B have not been diagnosed. The study focused on finding ways to improve testing for hepatitis B and ensure that people who test positive are connected to care and treatment.

Why is this important?

Hepatitis B can remain silent for many years without symptoms, meaning people may not know they are infected until serious complications develop. In England, it is estimated that fewer than half of those living with hepatitis B have been diagnosed. Improving testing and access to care is essential if the UK is to meet global targets to eliminate hepatitis B as a public health threat. Without better diagnosis and treatment, many people will continue to develop preventable liver disease.

What did we do?

Systematic reviews are an organised way of looking for research that answer a specific question and analyses and combines the results. They follow strict rules to prevent bias and ensure the findings are trustworthy. We carried out a systematic review of published studies from multiple international databases to look at ways (also known as interventions) to increase hepatitis B testing and improve linkage to care. We analysed and compared results from studies that included different strategies, such as education programmes, electronic health record alerts, community testing, and integrated screening approaches. Where possible, we combined results using statistical methods (meta-analysis) to estimate the overall effect of these interventions.

Key findings

Overall, interventions significantly increased hepatitis B testing rates. Education, integrated screening programmes (testing for multiple infections at once), and the use of digital medical records to find people who might have hepatitis B were particularly effective. These approaches more than doubled the likelihood of people being tested in some cases. However, there was considerable variation between studies, and not all approaches (such as community-based testing or contact tracing) showed clear benefits.

What do these findings mean?

The results suggest that targeted and system-based approaches, such as using healthcare data systems and combining testing programmes, are effective ways to increase hepatitis B diagnosis. Scaling up these strategies could help identify more people living with hepatitis B and connect them to treatment. This is a key step towards reducing health inequalities and achieving national and global goals to eliminate hepatitis B as a public health threat.