LETTER TO THE EDITOR

HCV genotype 4 circulating in the city of Franca, São Paulo State, Brazil

Authors

Rejane Maria Tommasini Grotto1
Silvia Maria Corvino2
Juliana Lara Padovani3
Sônia Maria de Coppio Soqueira4
Maria Inês de Moura Campos Pardini5

1BS, PhD Researcher; Molecular Biology Laboratory, Blood Transfusion Center, Medical School, Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP), Brazil
2BS, MSc Researcher; Molecular Biology Laboratory, Blood Transfusion Center, Medical School, UNESP, Brazil
3BS, MSc Post-graduation Student; Molecular Biology Laboratory, Blood Transfusion Center, Medical School, UNESP, Brazil
4MD, Physician, Santa Casa de Paraguaçu Paulista, SP, Brazil
5BS, PhD; Molecular Biology Laboratory, Blood Transfusion Center, Medical School, UNESP, Brazil

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Correspondence to:
Rejane Maria Tommasini Grotto
Laboratório de Biologia Molecular, Divisão Hemoceentro, Faculdade de Medicina, UNESP
Distrito Rubião Júnior, s/nº Botucatu, SP, Brazil
18618-000 regrotto@uol.com.br

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The hepatitis C virus (HCV) genotype distribution worldwide depends on the geographic region1 and although genotype 1 is the most prevalent in Brazil, followed by types 3 and 2, other genotypes have been reported in the country, albeit with a low occurrence rate.2 Identification of the viral genotype has epidemiological, clinical and laboratory importance, as it is necessary for therapeutic indication, diagnostic assay target definition and indicates infection progression.3

In the city of Franca, in the countryside of São Paulo State, Brazil, one case of hepatitis C virus genotype 4 (HCV-4) was identified in a 38-year-old male patient from the town of Paraguaçu Paulista, whose HCV infection had been confirmed since 2005. The patient reported the use of intravenous drugs, having been an inmate for several years and having travelled around the state many times. He was currently living in the city of Franca.

Clinically, the patient had a confirmed case of pulmonary tuberculosis. The patient’s circulating virus was genotyped by reverse hybridization and the result disclosed the presence of viral genotype 4c/4d. This result was confirmed by automated sequencing of the genomic regions 5’UTR, NS5B and core.

The analysis of the regions sequenced through HCV-Blast available at the database The Los Alamos HCV sequence (http://hcv.lanl.gov) confirmed the presence of genotype 4; however, the subtyping turned out to be 4a, which was in disagreement with the subtyping obtained through reverse hybridization. Discordant results in genotype 4 subtyping through sequencing and reverse hybridization have been previously reported by Zekri et al.,4 as well as in other genotypes.5

Case reports as the one described here are important to characterize the epidemics and to detect variation in genotype distribution in the country, as well as to promote epidemiological surveillance and acquire information about the virus introduction and transmission routes in the country.

REFERENCES