

## An Outbreak of Hepatitis A in the Taipei Metropolitan Area

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### Abstract

Between January 1 and February 28, 2007, 14 confirmed hepatitis A cases were reported in the Taipei Metropolitan Area. Because these cases were scattered in different districts, it was necessary to investigate to find possible epidemiological linkages, infection source, and route of transmission.

We used a semi-structured questionnaire to interview by telephone, gathering information on each case's basic demographics and daily activity. Among the 14 hepatitis A patients, six lived in Taipei City and eight in Taipei County; six were men and eight were women. Their ages ranged from 11- to 65-years (median = 37). None were recent immigrants. Ten were symptomatic; four were identified through routine physical examination. Other than a Thai national, who had left Taiwan by the time of the interview, interviews of the other 13 persons did not show that their infections occurred while traveling outside of Taiwan. Eating-out was possibly the main risk factor for infection. Roadside food stalls and breakfast sandwich shops should be investigated to find the source(s) of this incident. Another possible

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infection source is contaminated raw vegetables and fruits. Drinking-water at home and personal hygiene were probably not associated with hepatitis A infections.

The local health authorities should use the same procedures and tools (such as identical questionnaires and nucleotide sequencing) to investigate sporadic cases of hepatitis A to identify possible infection sources.

**Keywords:** Hepatitis A, sporadic cases, epidemiological investigation