

# Prevalence of hepatitis B virus amongst refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review

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**Background:** Hepatitis B, caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV), is a global public health issue. Most people with hepatitis B are in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC), where health systems and resources are often constrained. Refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons (IDPs) often face barriers in accessing health care and are a priority population at risk of hepatitis B. High rates of HBV amongst refugees and migrants arriving in high income countries has been reported but no systematic review to date has assessed prevalence in LMIC. We performed a systematic review of the prevalence of HBV amongst refugees in LMIC.

**Methods:** We performed an electronic search using databases, grey literature and manual review of reference lists. We included full text articles in English language reporting the prevalence of HBV amongst refugees, asylum seekers and/or IDPs living in LMIC, defined by World Bank classification. Risk of bias was assessed.

**Results:** Twenty eight studies were included for review. Three studies reported <2% prevalence, 15 studies 2-8%, and ten studies >8%; rates varied significantly between and within countries. Risk factors for HBV included unsafe injections, low immunization coverage, low awareness, mother-to-child transmission, and limited health services. Studies varied in design and risk of bias was high.

**Conclusion:** This is the first systematic review of the prevalence of HBV amongst refugees in LMIC, where most refugees globally reside. Though studies on this topic are scarce, they suggest a high prevalence amongst refugees in LMIC, with wide variation between and within countries. Further study of prevalence and risk factors for hepatitis B amongst refugees in LMIC is needed, to inform public health responses. Refugees and displaced populations are an important group to include in national and global efforts to eliminate hepatitis B.

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