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EPIDEMIOLOGY OF THE HEPATITIS C VIRUS

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4.5.2 Possible routes of household transmission

Ritual blood exchange

Atrah et al (1994) found that of 52 blood donors in England who were HCV positive, 14 per cent gave a history of ritual blood exchange during childhood or early adult life (the practice of having 'blood brothers' or 'blood sisters') and denied other risk factors.

Sharing of nonsterile medical equipment

Sharing of nonsterile injecting equipment within families as a part of medical care has been implicated as a cause of horizontal transmission in Italy where it was a common practice until the 1970s (Buscarini et al 1993; Frosi et al.1995).

In Japan, sterile injection equipment is still not used in some parts of the country, and this, combined with the Japanese usually being given drug treatment by injection, may explain the very high rates of HCV in parts of Japan (Hayashi et al 1995; Nakashima et al 1995).

Many other studies of household transmission have not investigated this route of transmission, and this route may explain the apparently high rate of horizontal transmission in Japan and Italy.

This route may explain the strong relationship of anti-HCV positivity with age in these countries, because the medical use of nonsterile injecting equipment has probably decreased recently.

[http://www.australiantransplantauthority.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/FB79CD1ECA5FA8A9CA256F180083147E/\\$File/hepc_epidemiology.pdf](http://www.australiantransplantauthority.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/FB79CD1ECA5FA8A9CA256F180083147E/$File/hepc_epidemiology.pdf)