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## Antenatal testing and Hepatitis B virus in Australia

**Chukwunonso Ogemdi Ashibuogwu**  
Torrens University, Australia

Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) affects about 257 million individuals throughout the world (World Health Organization [WHO], 2017). Chronic hepatitis causes serious illness and could lead to cirrhosis of the liver, cancer, and premature death (Australasian Sexual Health Alliance, 2017). (MacLachlan et al, 2013). In Australia, antenatal testing data reveal a prevalence of Chronic Hepatitis B of between 1 and 2%, being increased in women born abroad in prevalent areas, and amid Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (Turnour, Cretikos, Conaty, 2011). Australia being a multicultural nation, increased rates of chronic HBV are seen in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities especially from South East and North East Asia. This establishes the fact that HBV is endemic in many of the countries of origin of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Statistics reveals that 9% of the Australian population suffering from chronic hepatitis are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations (Liu B, Guthridge S, Qin Li S et al, 2012). HBV is transmitted by contact with infected blood or body fluids. HBV may be transmitted from mother-to-child; through close contact especially in childhood; through the use of sharps like injecting drug use (IDU), unsafe tattooing and piercing and through unprotected sex (WHO, 2017). During pregnancy, women with HBV are usually in stable state but are monitored closely if presented with cirrhosis. Statistics shows that women with a high viral load have a high risk of about 8-9% of transmitting HBV to their infants, despite the use of HBIG and HBV vaccine (Wiseman, Fraser, Holden et al., 2009). Universal screening for HBV is recommended by the Australasian Society of Infectious Diseases (ASID) (Palasanthiran, Starr, Jones, 2007), and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) (2017), every pregnant woman ought to be offered a test for HBV in pregnancy, irrespective of preceding testing or vaccination.

## Biography

Chukwunonso Ogemdi Ashibuogwu moved to Australia for further studies. He holds a degree in Microbiology and Public Health and he is currently undergoing a Master of Public health and Master of Global Project Management at Torrens University, Australia. Passionate about health and wellbeing of people, the move to health sector was a natural fit. Chukwunonso has worked in both laboratory and research institutes in Nigeria prior moving to Australia. In his free time, Nonso loves to sing and listen to classical and opera pieces to ease pressures of life and he also supports live music events.

nonso.ashibuogwu@gmail.com

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