



# Replication Study: Measuring the Prevalence of Hepatitis B Surface Antigen in Pregnant Women at First Antenatal Visits in The Gambia, 2002

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## Abstract

Hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection remains a significant public health burden in sub-Saharan Africa, with vertical transmission a primary route. A foundational study from The Gambia measured the prevalence of Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) in pregnant women at first antenatal visits, establishing key baseline data. Replication of such studies is critical for verifying results and assessing consistency over time. This replication study aimed to repeat the methodology of the original Gambian study to measure HBsAg prevalence in pregnant women at their first antenatal care visit. The primary objective was to generate a comparable prevalence estimate to validate the earlier findings and inform maternal and child health policy. A cross-sectional study was conducted at the same major urban antenatal clinic as the original research. A consecutive sample of pregnant women attending their first antenatal visit was enrolled. Sociodemographic data were collected, and venous blood samples were tested for HBsAg using the same standardised enzyme immunoassay technique. Data analysis adhered to the original protocol to ensure direct comparability. Samples from 418 pregnant women were analysed. The HBsAg prevalence was 12.9%. This result is consistent in both magnitude and direction with the prevalence reported in the foundational study, confirming a high endemicity of HBV infection within this population. This replication confirms a persistently high prevalence of HBsAg among pregnant women in The Gambia, indicating an ongoing significant burden of HBV. The findings validate the original study and underscore the continued necessity for robust prevention strategies. We recommend the maintained and universal integration of HBsAg screening into routine antenatal care in The Gambia. Furthermore, the strengthening of infant immunisation programmes and mechanisms to ensure follow-up for HBsAg-positive mothers and their infants is essential. Hepatitis B, HBsAg, prevalence, pregnant women, antenatal care, replication study, The Gambia. This study provides a direct methodological replication of a foundational study, confirming the persistent high endemicity of HBV among pregnant women in The Gambia and offering evidence to support existing public health policy.

**Keywords:** *Hepatitis B, Prevalence, Antenatal screening, Sub-Saharan Africa, Vertical transmission, HBsAg*

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