

Are Swedish residents aware about congenital cytomegalovirus and how it can be prevented?

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Background: Cytomegalovirus (CMV), if contracted during pregnancy, can be transmitted to the baby and lead to permanent consequences, such as hearing loss. The prevalence of congenital cytomegalovirus (cCMV) in Sweden is an estimated 0.5%.

Aim: To assess the awareness of CMV in Sweden, and the attitudes and practice for prevention of cCMV.

Method: An anonymous survey was distributed to adults across Sweden to assess their awareness of CMV and its transmission. A follow-up survey will be distributed to parents of young children to assess their attitudes toward cCMV screening and their preventative behaviors during pregnancy.

Result: At time of abstract submission, 304 adults in Sweden have responded to the first survey, 78% of whom had not heard of CMV. Only 21% were aware that CMV infection could affect a fetus, in comparison to 83% for HIV/AIDs. Eighty-two percent of respondents were aware that pregnant women should avoid eating raw meat, but only 7% were aware that pregnant women should avoid sharing utensils with young children. Over 90% of participants were interested in learning more about CMV.

Discussion: cCMV is the most prevalent preventable cause of congenital hearing loss. Preliminary results show that adults in Sweden are not aware of its existence. While other preventative actions during pregnancy are well known in a population, strategies for preventing CMV are not. Analyses of the survey directed toward parents of young children will disclose more about preventative behaviors during pregnancy, and attitudes toward cCMV screening.