

Abstract

We evaluated the natural course of delta superinfection in patients with chronic B viral hepatitis by examining serial liver biopsy specimens from 23 patients. The mean follow-up period was 2.5 years, and the average number of liver biopsies per patient was 2.8. The striking features were: (i) the prolonged acute hepatitis-like necroinflammatory activity (mean = 15 months) following acute delta hepatitis and (ii) rapid progression to severe forms of liver disease within a mean interval of 24 months from the onset of delta superinfection. Although there was a high frequency of stainable delta antigen (90%) in these liver biopsy specimens, there was no correlation between the degree of positivity and the histopathological changes.