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CHANGES IN HTLV-I POSITIVE RATES AMONG WOMEN IN OKINAWA PRIOR TO THE EFFECTS INTRODUCED TO PREVENT VERTICAL TRANS THROUGH BREAST MILK FEEDING

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Abstract: Objectives: Human T cell leukemia virus type-I (HTLV-I) (human T-cell leukemia and HTLV-I associated myelopathy (HAM) are often infected vertically, especially via mother's milk. Since 1985, breast milk has been adopted at a hospital in Okinawa to prevent vertical infections.
Methods: We examined HTLV-I antibodies in all of the women (to be born) after 24 gestational weeks at a hospital on the Okinawa main island from January 1998 to December 1999.

Results: The positive rate among all pregnant women was always high, but that among primipara alone. Both figures decreased over the period studied, but the rate among primipara (36-39%) did not change significantly. The percentage of HTLV-I positive women among the HTLV-I positive total was close to the rate in 1985 to 1988, but it was considerably lower than the overall primipara rate (26%).

Conclusions: Preventive measures against HTLV-I infection did not result in a decrease in HTLV-I positive mothers before 1999 because these rates were high from 1985, and so there must be other reasons for the decrease in HTLV-I positive women. Further studies on social factors and by year of birth are needed to identify factors influencing HTLV-carrier ratios among pregnant women.

Key words: [HTLV-I](#), [Okinawa](#), [pregnancy](#), [ATL](#)

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