2021 Top Hep Science Stories

Fatty liver disease dominated the Hep science news this year, but COVID-19 remains a concern for people with liver disease.

December 27, 2021 By Liz Highleyman and Ian Anderson

COVID-19 was a leading concern again this year. Studies have shown that people with liver disease may be at risk for more severe COVID-19 and may not respond as well to vaccines. This is especially true for liver transplant recipients who take immunosuppressive medications. Some people who do not initially respond to vaccines fare better after a third dose, but some still are not full protected and need to continue taking precautions (No. 8). In addition, the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on care and services, including hepatitis C testing and treatment (No. 10).

Now that hepatitis C can be easily treated, fatty liver disease—non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and its more severe form, non-alcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH)—has become a leading cause of cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver-related death (Nos. 1, 7, 11, 12, 14 and 16). Another year has passed with no effective approved therapies, as several drugs that looked promising early on have failed in larger trials (Nos. 4, 9 and 13). As a result, management of fatty liver disease still relies on lifestyle changes, such as diet, exercise and weight loss (Nos. 3, 17 and 18).

Hepatitis C treatment has gotten easier and shorter, and studies continue to confirm its effectiveness (Nos. 19 and 20). But people with cirrhosis due to hep C or other causes remain at risk for liver cancer, and many are not receiving the recommended monitoring to catch cancer at an early, more treatable stage (No. 15).

Finally, more research has shown that coffee is associated with better liver health (No. 6), so usher in the new year with a cup of java!

Here are the Hep science news stories with the most views this year:

1. More Seniors Need Liver Transplants, Often Due to NASH
Posted: December 6

2. Statin Use Linked to Reduced Risk for Liver Cancer Recurrence
Posted: August 30

3. Red Meat Consumption Linked to Higher NAFLD Risk
Posted: August 26

4. Semaglutide Shows Promise for Fatty Liver Disease
Posted: January 18

5. Combination Therapy for Methamphetamine Use Found to Be Effective for Some
Posted: January 29

6. Coffee Consumption Linked to Lower Liver Fibrosis
Posted: October 15

7. Cirrhosis Linked to Increased Mortality, Liver Complications in People With NAFLD
Posted: November 1

8. Can a Third COVID-19 Vaccine Dose Help Protect Liver Transplant Patients?
Posted: June 27

9. Resmetirom Appears to Cut Liver Fat and Improve Fibrosis
Posted: June 30

10. Hepatitis C Testing, Treatment Fell in the Early Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic
Posted: June 18

11. Fatty Liver Disease Is Highly Prevalent Worldwide
Posted: March 1

12. Fatty Liver Linked to Fibrosis Progression in People With Hepatitis B
Posted: February 25

13. Lanifibranor Both Resolves NASH and Reduces Liver Fibrosis
Posted: January 25

14. Newer Fatty Liver Disease Definition Points to Higher Mortality Risk
Posted: September 29

15. Most People With Cirrhosis Don’t Receive Recommended Monitoring
Posted: November 3

16. Fatty Liver Disease Is Linked to Higher Liver Cancer Risk
Posted: May 14

17. Modified Mediterranean Diet Reduces Fatty Liver Disease
Posted: January 27

18. High-Fat Diet, Intermittent Caloric Restriction Linked to Lower Liver Fat
Posted: July 12

19. Curing Hepatitis C Improves Cognitive Function and Quality of Life

Posted: October 25

20. Shorter Antiviral Regimen Cures Hepatitis C
Posted: January 4

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