Spontaneous Functional Cures of Hep B Occur Infrequently

Researchers conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to estimate the rate of spontaneous loss of surface antigen in those with hep B.

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People with hepatitis B virus (HBV) experience spontaneous loss of the virus's surface antigen, or HBsAg, at a low rate, Infectious Disease Advisor reports. HBsAg loss is akin to a functional cure and is a major goal of research into new treatments for HBV.

Publishing their findings in the Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology, researchers conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of 56 studies of people with HBV around the world who were not receiving treatment for the virus.

Out of 48,972 participants in all the studies, 3,837 (7.8 percent) experienced spontaneous loss of the surface antigen during a cumulative 352,381 years of follow-up. This meant that 1.17 percent of the participants experienced HBsAg loss each year. This rate did not differ based on whether participants lived in an area where HBV was endemic. The HBsAg loss rate was 1.17 percent in endemic areas and 1.29 percent in nonendemic areas, a difference that was not statistically significant, meaning it could have been driven by chance.

"The low and homogeneous rate of HBsAg loss highlights the need for new therapeutics aimed at achieving functional cure across different patient groups and geographical regions," the study authors concluded.

To read the Infectious Disease Advisor article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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