Beat Hep C, Live Longer?

This is according to an analysis of nearly 5,000 Italians recently treated for the virus.

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Treating and curing hepatitis C virus (HCV) with direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) is associated with a lower risk of death—not just from liver-related causes but non-liver-related causes as well. That's according to Italian researchers who examined data on nearly 5,000 people who were recently treated for HCV with DAAs and were followed for a median of 65 weeks afterward.

Twenty-four percent of the cohort did not have cirrhosis, 67 percent had compensated cirrhosis (the less severe form of the advanced liver disease) and 9 percent had decompensated cirrhosis (the more severe form of the advanced liver disease).

More than 90 percent of the cohort members were cured of hep C.

After receiving DAA treatment, 53 participants, or about 1 percent of the cohort, died—23 of them from liver-related causes and 30 of them from other causes, including cardiovascular disease and sepsis.

Compared with those who were cured of hep C, those who were not cured were nearly 30 times more likely to die of any cause, including 15 times more likely to die of liver-related causes and 42 times more likely to die of other causes. Compared with those without the liver condition, those with decompensated cirrhosis were 30 times more likely to die of liver-related causes and three times more likely to die of non-liver-related causes.

"It is now clear to all physicians involved in HCV treatment that patients who have lived with this disease for years and who finally get [cured] will have a marked improvement in overall survival," says the study's lead author, Vincenza Calvaruso, MD, PhD, a lecturer of gastroenterology at the University of Palermo in Italy.

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