Benefits of Hep C Cure After Liver Cancer

Curing hep C slashes risk of death for those with liver cancer history

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Treating and curing hepatitis C virus (HCV) with direct-acting antiviral (DAA) drugs is associated with a much lower risk of death among those with a history of successfully treated hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common form of liver cancer.

Previous studies indicated that DAA treatment was not associated with a higher risk of liver cancer recurrence, and the new study appears to confirm that DAAs decrease health risks for people with HCV and a history of liver cancer.

The authors of the new study analyzed data on 797 people with HCV-related liver cancer in the United States and Canada who received successful treatment for the malignancy between 2013 and 2017.

A total of 383 (48%) of the study members received DAA treatment, 43 (11%) of whom died during 941 cumulative years of follow-up. Of the 414 people who were not treated with DAAs, 103 (25%) died during 527 cumulative years of follow-up.

After adjusting the data to account for various factors, the authors of the study found that DAA treatment was associated with a 46% reduced risk of death during follow-up. Individuals who were cured with DAA therapy had an even greater 71% reduction in mortality, though those who were not cured did not see a significant benefit.

“Our study demonstrated that hepatitis C therapy is safe and improves survival in this growing group of patients [about whom] there was uncertainty about best practices,” says study leader Amit Singal, MD, the medical director of the University of Texas Southwestern Liver Tumor Program in Dallas. “These results change the paradigm from you could treat a patient’s hepatitis C in these patients to you should treat it.”

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