Hepatitis C Is Linked With a Higher Overall Cancer Rate

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People with hepatitis C virus (HCV) have higher cancer rates than those who do not have the virus, MedPage Today reports. Researchers conducted a retrospective study of all the cancer diagnoses among adults in the Kaiser Permanente, Southern California, health care system, covering the period between 2008 and 2012. They presented their findings at the 50th International Liver Congress in Vienna, Austria.

The study included 145,210 patient years among those with hep C and 14 million among those without the virus.

During the five years of the study, there were 2,213 cancer diagnoses among the hep C group, for a rate of 1,524 per 100,000 people, and 1,654 cancer diagnoses when excluding liver cancer, for a rate of 1,139 per 100,000. Those in the non-hep C group experienced 84,419 cancer diagnoses, for a rate of 605 per 100,000, and 83,795 diagnoses when excluding liver cancer, for a rate of 601 per 100,000.

Considering all cancers, those with hep C had a cancer rate 2.5 times greater than those without the virus. When factoring out liver cancer, HCV-positive people had nearly twice the rate of cancer as HCV-negative people

“These findings certainly point to the suggestion that hepatitis C may be associated with an increased risk of cancer,” Lisa Nyberg, MD, MPH, of Kaiser Permanente, Southern California, who was the senior author of the study, said in a press release. “However, the findings must be interpreted with caution, as the study also showed that confounding factors such as alcohol abuse, tobacco, obesity, and diabetes modified the results.”

To read the press release, click here.

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