Cirrhosis Caused by Viral Hepatitis Leads to Higher Long-Term Risk of Liver Cancer

Those with cirrhosis due to alcoholism or autoimmune or metabolic disease had a lower 10-year liver cancer rate in a group of Britons.

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Among those with cirrhosis, the 10-year risk of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC, the most common form of liver cancer) is higher among those whose liver disease was caused by viral hepatitis, including hepatitis B and C viruses (HBV/HCV), Healio reports. By comparison, those with cirrhosis due to alcoholism or autoimmune or metabolic disease had a lower long-term risk, one that arguably does not even require ongoing medical monitoring, according to the authors of a new paper.

Publishing their findings in Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics, researchers studied data from the U.K.'s General Practice Research Databases on 3,107 people diagnosed with cirrhosis between 1987 and 2006. They determined the rate of liver cancer among this group by assessing national cancer registry data covering 1971 to 2006.

Fifty-six percent of the cohort had alcoholic cirrhosis, 12 percent had cirrhosis caused by viral hepatitis, 11 had cirrhosis due to autoimmune or metabolic disease and 21 percent had cirrhosis due to an unknown cause.

There were 12,977 cumulative years of available follow-up data on the study cohort. During that time, there were 51 new cases of liver cancer among the group, for a rate of 0.39 percent per year. The liver cancer rates were higher among men, older individuals and those with chronic viral hepatitis.

After adjusting the data for various factors, the researchers found that having chronic viral hepatitis as the cause of cirrhosis was associated with a 3.22-fold greater likelihood of developing liver cancer than having alcoholic cirrhosis.

The estimated 10-year cumulative rate of liver cancer was 4 percent for those with cirrhosis due to viral hepatitis, 3.2 percent for those with cirrhosis related to autoimmune or metabolic disease, 1.2 percent for alcoholic cirrhosis and 1.1 percent for cirrhosis due to an unknown cause.

To read the study abstract, click here.

To read the Healio article, click here.

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