For Those With Cirrhosis, Costs Leap if Condition Is Linked to Alcoholism

Researchers also found that disease severity is worse for those with alcoholic cirrhosis compared with those with nonalcoholic cirrhosis.

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Health care costs and disease severity are higher among those with alcoholic cirrhosis compared with those with a nonalcoholic version of the severe liver disease, MedPage Today reports.

Researchers analyzed medical records from a large database that included 500 million private health insurance claims from more than 100 large employers. They sought diagnosis codes for cirrhosis and cirrhosis not linked to alcohol among individuals ages 18 to 64.

Findings were presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases in Washington, DC.

Among those with alcoholic and nonalcoholic cirrhosis, the proportions that had encephalopathy were a respective 6 percent and 1 percent according to individuals' baseline medical records. The respective rates for ascites, an abnormal accumulation of fluid in the abdomen that is related to cirrhosis and is associated with a higher risk of death, were 22 percent and 8 percent, while the respective rates for acute kidney injury were 8 percent and 4 percent.

The average medical cost for those with alcoholic cirrhosis was $44,835, compared with $23,319 for those with nonalcoholic cirrhosis.

Compared with those with nonalcoholic cirrhosis, those with the alcoholic form of the disease had 27.3 greater hospital admissions for any cause per 100 individuals and also had 8.2 excess hospital readmissions and 7.2 excess cirrhosis-related admissions.

Despite representing only about one in three cirrhosis patients, those with alcoholic cirrhosis account for the majority of costs related to cirrhosis, $5 billion out of $9.5 billion total.

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