Those With Both HIV and Hepatitis C Face High Liver Cancer Rates

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HIV ramps up liver disease progression among those coinfected with hepatitis C virus (HCV), even in the face of antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for HIV, MedPage Today reports. Publishing their findings in Annals of Internal Medicine, researchers at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania analyzed data on 4,280 coinfected people taking ARVs and 6,079 hep C monoinfected people receiving medical care between 1997 and 2010.

Among the coinfected study participants, there were 271 cases (6.3 percent) of decompensated cirrhosis, compared with 305 cases (5.0 percent) among the monoinfected group. After adjusting for various factors, the researchers calculated that those coinfected with HIV and HCV had a 56 percent greater likelihood of decompensated cirrhosis when compared with the monoinfected group. Those with a HIV viral load above 1,000 had a 59 percent greater risk of advanced liver disease compared with the monoinfected participants, while those with a lower viral load had a 44 percent greater risk.

“Our results suggest that serious consideration should be given to initiating hepatitis C treatment in patients coinfected with HIV and hepatitis C—particularly among those with advanced liver fibrosis or cirrhosis—in order to try to reduce the risk of serious, potentially life-threatening liver complications,” Vincent Lo Re III, MD, MSCE, an assistant professor of medicine at Penn and the study’s lead author, said in a release. “By taking action sooner, we may be able to reduce the risk of advanced liver disease in coinfected patients.”

Because the study was mainly comprised of men, the findings are not necessarily applicable to women.

To read the MedPage Today story, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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