



Could Diabetes Treatment Help Stop Fatty Liver Disease?

NAFLD appears to have a “bidirectional” course in patients with type 2 diabetes, according to new findings.

October 19, 2018 By [Casey Halter](#)

Treating type 2 diabetes may boost people’s chances of battling non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), according to a recent presentation at the American College of Gastroenterology’s Annual Meeting and [reported on by Healio](#).

The findings, presented by liver disease researchers at Stanford University, suggest NAFLD may have a “bidirectional” course in patients with type 2 diabetes, noting that treatment for the latter caused a fatty liver disease regression in 2.2 percent of patients without any NAFLD-specific interventions. This regression appeared to occur even when patients experienced an increase in other NAFLD-related risk factors such as obesity, hypertension, kidney disease and high cholesterol. The observation caused researchers to ask, Could diabetes treatment help stop fatty liver disease?

For the study, researchers analyzed the data of 50,695 patients with type 2 diabetes over a median period of 84.4 months. During the study’s follow-up period, 80.5 percent of those studied had NAFLD and their status did not change, 8.9 percent developed NAFLD, 8.4 percent were never diagnosed with NAFLD, and 2.2 percent of patients with NAFLD regressed to “no NAFLD” status.

Researchers noted that throughout the study period, the prevalence of fatty liver disease risk factors—including obesity, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, hyperlipidemia and coronary artery disease—increased among all patients. So, what happened?

Some factors associated with NAFLD regression included male sex, non-white ethnicity, higher baseline aspartate aminotransferase and albumin counts, and use of pentoxifylline, a common type 2 diabetes drug.

“The effects of commonly used diabetic medications and pentoxifylline on the clinical course of NAFLD should be further analyzed,” concluded study presenter Amandeep Singh, MD, from Stanford University.

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