An Early Cure Protects the Liver?

Among a large group treated with minimal or no liver fibrosis, liver-health problems were almost nonexistent up to three years later.

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People who are cured of hepatitis C virus (HCV) when they have minimal or no liver fibrosis (scarring) have a very low rate of liver-health problems during the subsequent three years.

Researchers analyzed data from Gilead Sciences regarding 1,444 people who had no more than minimal fibrosis and were cured of hep C by a regimen including one of the company's HCV drugs, among them Sovaldi (sofosbuvir), Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir), Epclusa (sofosbuvir/velpatasvir) and Vosevi (sofosbuvir/velpatasvir/voxilaprevir).

These individuals received liver-health screenings every 24 weeks after being cured of hep C. A total of 580 individuals completed the analysis and had the full 144 weeks of follow-up, 545 were still enrolled in follow-up at the time of Gilead's report and 319 dropped out of follow-up before 144 weeks were up.

Only three people experienced a notable liver-related health problem during follow-up, including jaundice, ascites (the accumulation of protein-containing fluid in the abdomen) and hepatic encephalopathy (loss of brain function when the liver fails to filter toxins from the blood).

Six people died during the follow-up, but none died of liver-related causes. No one developed liver cancer.

According to the study's lead author, Marc Bourlière, MD, head of the hepatology and gastroenterology department at the Hôpital Saint Joseph in Marseille, France, the study "nicely demonstrates" that among those with no or mild fibrosis, extensive follow-up after they are cured of hep C isn't needed except for those with other health conditions associated with fibrosis, including being overweight and drinking alcohol.

"Overall, these results are excellent and reflect the benefit of HCV cure," says Bourlière.

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