Long-term Entecavir Is Safe and Effective for Hep B Patients, Even with Cirrhosis

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Entecavir has shown safety and efficacy over a five-year period in people with hepatitis B who haven't yet tried treatment with nucleos(t)ide analogues,(NUC), according to the National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project. The medication even showed promise in those with cirrhosis. Italian researchers presented results from a study of the nucleos(t)ide analogue at the annual meeting of the American Academy for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) in Boston.

One study enrolled 418 NUC-naive patients with chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) in 19 Italian health centers. All patients took entecavir monotherapy. Researchers monitored them with an HBV viral load test and a screen for resistance to entecavir every three to six months during 60 months of follow-up. Among the cohort, 204 (49 percent) had cirrhosis and 41 (10 percent) had hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common form of liver cancer. At baseline, none in the cohort had an undetectable viral load. By six months, 67 percent were undetectable; by one year, 85 percent; and by five years, 100 percent. Only one patient developed resistance to the drug. Long-term use of entecavir in patients with cirrhosis prevented decompensation of the liver, but not liver cancer.

To read study slides from AASLD, click here.

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