High Rates of Liver Disease in People With Long-Term Hep C

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A considerable proportion of those with Hepatitis C virus (HCV) in a large Southern California health care system either already had cirrhosis or developed the condition over 12 years, HIVandHepatitis.com reports. Researchers analyzed data on nearly 25,000 people with hep C who received care for more than a year through Kaiser Permanente Southern California.

The study excluded those with liver cancer or who had received a liver transplant.

Nineteen percent of the cohort had cirrhosis at the outset of the study while 23 percent developed it during the 12-year follow-up period. Fifty-eight percent never had cirrhosis.

Among those who started the study with cirrhosis, 17 percent had decompensated cirrhosis (the more advanced form of the condition, compared with compensated cirrhosis, which is the milder form), 41 percent developed decompensation and 42 percent never developed decompensation.

Of those who did not have cirrhosis at the study's outset, 28 percent were diagnosed with cirrhosis during the study, for an annual rate of 5.63 percent. Twenty percent of this group had decompensation upon being diagnosed with cirrhosis, 46 percent later developed decompensation, and 34 percent never did.

Cirrhosis was linked to various other health problems as well. People with the condition were more likely to have cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Those with decompensated cirrhosis were more likely than those without cirrhosis or who had compensated cirrhosis to have cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease and to be obese. They were also more likely to need a liver transplant. They had a much greater risk of developing hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC, the most common form of liver cancer), and also had a greater risk of death compared with those with compensated cirrhosis, who in turn had a greater risk of death than those without cirrhosis.

To read the HIVandHepatitis article, click here.

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