New Test Can Detect Fatty Liver Disease Before There's Damage

The tool can predict whether people with fatty liver disease will develop advanced fibrosis with up to 92 percent accuracy.

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A new liver test may soon be able to predict which patients will go on to develop advanced fibrosis after being diagnosed with non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), according to a new study published in the journal Hepatology.

Researchers say the new noninvasive tool could be pivotal in the fight against NAFLD, which is the leading cause of chronic liver disease and affects approximately one in four people worldwide. The obesity- and diabetes-related disease is currently on the rise and can lead to irreparable scarring of the liver, significantly increasing the risk of liver failure and cancer.

For the study, researchers at the Westmead Institute for Medical Research in Sydney, Australia, developed a new score, based on the PRO-C3 biological marker, to accurately predict advanced liver fibrosis in people with NAFLD. This score was developed based on the discovery that PRO-C3 progressively increases in the body as fibrosis becomes severe and was analyzed in 431 patents across Australia, the United Kingdom and Japan.

After combining this score with routine clinical information-including age, presence of diabetes and blood platelet count-researchers said they were able to accurately identify 92 percent of patients who would go on to develop advanced fibrosis. They also noted that the ability to identify advanced fibrosis in patients is crucial, as these are the patients who are most likely to develop future health complications.

Moving forward, the research team hopes to validate its score in a broader study cohort before pushing for widespread application and clinical availability.

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