Treating Hep B Appears to Lower Risk of Liver Cancer

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Antiviral treatment for hepatitis B virus (HBV) is linked to a reduced risk of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common form of liver cancer, MedPage Today reports. Publishing their findings in Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology, researchers conducted an analysis of 2,671 people drawn from the Chronic Hepatitis Cohort Study, who received a hep B diagnosis between 1992 and 2011.

Providing a median of 5.2 years of data, the participants developed HCC at a rate of 3 percent. There were 20 cases of the cancer out of 820 participants who received antiviral therapy for hep B, compared with 47 cases out of 1,851 who did not receive treatment. Consequently, treatment appeared to lower the risk of liver cancer by 61 percent. The reduced risk of cancer remained regardless of the level of fibrosis the participants had. Among participants who had viral loads above 20,000, those who were treated also had a lowered risk of cancer when compared with those who were not treated.

A limitation of the study is that there was not data available on variables such as alcohol use and viral genotypes; because of this, the findings may not apply to the hep B population as a whole.

To read the MedPage Today story, click here.

To read the study, click here.

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