Hepatitis C: Highlights from the 2013 Liver Meeting

November 5, 2013 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

The Liver Meeting was the first weekend in November. This annual conference of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) is the premier event for anyone remotely interested in the liver, an organ that we cannot live without. This year's presentations offered much hope for those with hepatitis C.

Here are a few highlights:

- The first time any study has shown that an all-oral, treatment can prevent recurrence of hepatitis C in patients who received liver transplants. Hepatitis C recurrence is universal following liver transplantation of recipients who had detectable virus at the time of the surgery. Interferon treatment is poorly tolerated and yields low response rates for hepatitis C recurrence prevention. In this small phase 2 study of 39 patients, approximately 64% were able to clear hepatitis C.
- Higher hepatitis C cure rates for patients with HIV/HCV coinfection using all-oral treatments. In a phase 3 study, patients were treated with sofosbuvir (one pill daily) and ribavirin (pills twice daily) for 12 or 24 weeks.

Genotype 1 patients with no prior treatment had a response rate of 76% when treated for 24 weeks.

Genotype 2 patients with no prior treatment had a

response rate of 88% when treated for 12 weeks.

Genotype 3 patients with no prior treatment had a response rate of 67% when treated for 12 weeks.

These drugs were well-tolerated and the side effects were mainly associated with ribavirin--fatigue, nausea, headache and insomnia.

- Hepatitis C treatments in the drug pipeline are pushing the envelope and redefining the meaning of success. In addition to the drugs that are awaiting FDA approval, other hepatitis C drugs are nipping at their heels. Although there are quite a few all-oral regimens, Merck and AbbVie's high cure rates are noteworthy. AbbVie's phase two studies had responses ranging from 90% to 95% in genotype 1 patients; Merck's ranged from 96% to 100%. Treatments durations varied, but 12 weeks looks like a feasible treatment length.

These highlights are just a slice of the encouraging news on the hepatitis C treatment front. For those interested in reading more, HEP Magazine is keeping up to date with the latest from the Liver Meeting. You can also visit the *AASLD* website for more information.

Although this year's Liver Meeting is cause for celebration, the news is not all good. Next week's blog post will discuss a health concern that affects us all. Fortunately, it is a concern that you can do something about.

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