



Hepatitis C Treatment and Racial Differences

March 27, 2017 By [Lucinda K. Porter RN](#)

When [hepatitis C treatment](#) was [interferon-based](#), the chances that you would respond favorably depended on many factors. A major factor was the type of IL28B gene you had inherited from your parents. There are three IL28B genotypes: CC, CT, and TT. If you had the CC genotype, you had the best chance of clearing hepatitis C on your own. You also had the best chance of responding to hepatitis C treatment that included interferon. The non-CC genotypes (CT or TT) were less likely to clear hep C or have a sustained virologic response (SVR).

The CC type occurs more frequently in certain [racial and ethnic backgrounds](#). East Asians have the best chance of having the CC genotype (90 to 100 percent); Blacks have the lowest chance (23 to 55 percent). Thus, Blacks had very poor SVR rates using interferon as a component of hepatitis C treatment.

All of this changed with the introduction of direct-acting antivirals (DAAs). Until recently, medical literature has reported fairly evenly distributed SVR rates. However, a recent article in Hepatology (February 2017) found that there is a difference in response rates between Blacks and non-Blacks, even when DAAs are used.

Research titled, “The Association Between Race/Ethnicity and The Effectiveness of Direct Antiviral Agents for Hepatitis C Virus Infection” by Feng Su and colleagues concluded, “Direct-acting antivirals produce high SVR rates in white, black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander/American Indian/Alaska Native patients; but after adjusting for baseline characteristics, black race and Hispanic ethnicity remain independent predictors of treatment failure. Short 8-week ledipasvir/sofosbuvir [[Harvoni](#)] monotherapy regimens should perhaps be avoided in black patients with genotype 1 hepatitis C virus.” The researchers were not sure if this is related to the IL28B genotype.

The Bottom Line: If you are Black and your medical provider prescribes 8 weeks of Harvoni, show her/him this research and insist on 12 weeks of hepatitis C treatment.
