The Latest Hepatitis C and HIV Conference News

March 12, 2018 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

The annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) was last week. CROI is a gathering of top researchers from around the world who share the latest studies, important developments, and best research methods in the ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS and related infectious diseases. Below are short summaries of some of the presentations I found most interesting.

Abstract Number 129 Fueling The Epidemic: Low Rates of Spontaneous Clearance of Acute HCV Coinfection - Authors: Christoph Boesecke, et al.

Summary: To date, no direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) are approved to treat acute hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections (infections lasting less than 6 months). Typically, health care providers wait to see if people clear hepatitis C spontaneously without treatment. If an HCV infection lasts longer than 6 months, the infection is considered chronic, and it is treated with DAAs.

This European study reviewed data from 465 mostly male (98%) HIV/HCV coinfected subjects, median age 41 years. The majority of participants likely contracted hepatitis C as a result of men having sex with men (MSM).

Results showed that spontaneous clearance of acute hepatitis C among those with HIV/HCV coinfection is rare at roughly 10 percent. Researchers concluded that early treatment should be considered in order to prevent further hep C transmission to sex partners.

Click here to read the entire abstract.

Abstract Number: 588 HIV-1 Enhances Sexual Transmission of Hepatitis C Virus by Human Langerhans Cells – Authors: Bernadien Nijmeijer, et al.

Summary: In general, it's been thought that sexual transmission of hepatitis C virus (HCV) is rare. Although this seems to be the case in many cases (especially in heterosexual settings), the prevalence of hepatitis C infections among HIV-infected men who have sex with men (MSM) is rising. Seeking to understand this better, researchers from the Netherlands looked to human Langerhans cells (LCs) for answers.

Basically, LCs are a type of immune cells found predominantly in the skin and mucosa. The data

strongly suggest that HIV-1 replication in mucosal tissues in HIV-1 infected MSM changes the way the LCs function. This is turn enhances hepatitis C virus transmission to liver cells (hepatocytes).

Click here to read the entire abstract and view the poster.

Abstract Number: 612 High Incidence of HCV Reinfection in MSM in the DAA Era - Authors: Patrick Ingiliz, et al.

Summary: Risk of hepatitis C virus (HCV) reinfection is associated with certain behavior, such as men who have sex with men (MSM) and people who use drugs for sexual enhancement (both injection and non-injection). This German study examined the frequency of HCV reinfections after treatment with direct-acting antivirals (DAA).

Collecting data from 2014-2017, researcher analyzed 2364 HIV/HCV co-infected and HCV mono-infected male subjects who were treated with DAAs at nine centers. In general, the rate of hepatitis C reinfection was low. However, there was an increased prevalence of hepatitis C reinfection among subjects with ongoing risk behaviors, particularly among men who have sex with men.

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Abstract Number: 621 High Prevalence of Advanced Liver Disease Among an HIV/HBV Real-World Cohort - Authors: Mamta K. Jain, et al.

Summary: This study enrolled 139 people who were coinfected with HIV and hepatitis B viral infection (HIV/HBV) from 8 centers in North America. Participants were mostly male (92 percent); half were Black; 36 percent had detectable HIV RNA, and the mean CD4 count was 478 cells/µL.

One fourth of these HIV/HBV subjects had cirrhosis, 24 percent of which had reached the decompensated stage. One subject had liver cancer without cirrhosis. Of those in which HBeAg status was available, half were HBeAg+, which was associated with detectable HBV DNA (viral load) and age.

These researchers recommended concentrated efforts to reduce HIV and HBV viral loads in younger HIV/HBV coinfected people as a goal to improve HBV outcomes in this group.

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