People with Hepatitis C Have Multiple Health Risks

March 13, 2017 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

In last week's blog (Hepatitis C Treatment and Liver Cancer Risk), I discussed findings from the 2017 Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) giving compelling reasons to treat everyone with hepatitis C who wants to be treated, and the earlier the better. If you weren't convinced about the value of hepatitis C treatment, here is more research. This study also comes from the 2017 CROI, and is titled, The Association Between HCV and Comorbid Conditions in 2 Large Patient Cohorts by Sarah Rowan and colleagues (Abstract 528).

This huge study looked at more than 100,000 medical records from two health care systems (Denver Health and Kaiser Permanente Colorado). They found that cirrhosis, liver cancer, HIV, renal disease, cardiovascular disease, mental illness, alcohol abuse, tobacco use, illicit drug use and death were significantly more common among people with hepatitis C. In the Kaiser system, diabetes was more common, whereas COPD was more common in the Denver Health System.

The bottom line: People who are living with hepatitis C have an increased risk of cirrhosis, liver cancer, depression, coronary artery disease, chronic kidney disease, and death compared to those who don't have hepatitis C.

Honestly, I am growing weary of stating the obvious. What will it take for insurers and medical providers to do the right thing. Screen people who are at risk for hepatitis C, provide linkage to care, offer treatment, and ramp up prevention measures. It's not rocket science, it's medicine.

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