Hep C Doesn’t Apparently Lead to Cognitive Decline in People With HIV

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Researchers believe they have crossed hepatitis C virus (HCV) off the list of factors that contribute to cognitive decline among HIV-positive people. Publishing their findings in the journal Neurology, investigators in the CNS HIV Antiretroviral Therapy Effects (CHARTER) study gave detailed neuropsychological exams to 1,582 people with HIV, 408 of whom were coinfected with HCV, in order to detect evidence of HIV-associated mental decline.

Despite the fact that the coinfected group was, compared with the HIV-monoinfected group, older, less educated and had lower test results in reading, comprehension, spelling and math, there was no evidence that the coinfected group performed worse on the neuropsychological exams.

“If a hepatitis C infection gets to the point where it damages liver function, the resulting inflammation might well contribute to mental impairment,” lead author David Clifford, MD, of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, said in a press release. “Beyond that, though, it doesn’t seem to be an active collaborator in the harm HIV does to the brain.”

The research team will now focus on inflammatory immune responses HIV triggers in the brain and gut during the early phase of infection.

To read the press release, click here.

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