Hep C Tied to Kidney Disease and Bone Loss

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For people living with HIV, exposure to hepatitis C virus (HCV) is linked to a higher risk of kidney disease and bone disorders. Additionally, a failed hep C cure among those with HIV is associated with a higher risk of diabetes compared with a successful cure.

Researchers analyzed data on about 5,000 Swiss people with HIV, half of whom had antibodies to HCV (meaning they had at least been exposed to the virus) and half of whom did not (meaning they had never been exposed to HCV). They were followed for a median eight years.

Among those who were exposed to HCV, about 540 had spontaneously cleared the infection (in many cases the immune system will beat the infection within a few months of exposure), 1,300 were chronically infected with HCV but had not been treated for the virus, 350 were treated and cured, 280 were treated but not cured and 45 were being treated.

Compared with individuals who had not been exposed to HCV, those exposed to the virus had about a sixfold increased risk of liver-related health events, an eightfold increased risk of liver-related death, a two-and-a-half-fold increased risk of kidney disease and a one-and-a-half-fold increased risk of osteoporosis or fracture.

When looking at just those who had been exposed to HCV, the researchers found that compared with those who had been treated and cured of the virus, those who had failed treatment had about a sevenfold increased risk of liver-related health events, a threefold increased risk of liver-related death and nearly a fivefold increased risk of diabetes.

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