Hep C’s Drag on Life Expectancy

Hepatitis C increases risk of death among people on HIV treatment.

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People on treatment for HIV have a higher risk of death if they are coinfected with hepatitis C virus (HCV). Treating hep C lowers the risk.

Researchers analyzed data on 3,056 people living with HIV who were followed for a median of 7.5 years in a pair of long-term studies. A total of 543 of these individuals had hepatitis C upon entering either study.

The researchers found that if all people with HIV had HCV, 14.7 percent would die during a 10-year period, compared with 10.4 percent dying if none had hep C. This indicated that HCV was associated with a 42 percent increased risk of death during a decadelong period.

If all those with HIV/HCV coinfection were treated for hep C, 14.9 percent would die during a 10-year period, compared with 18.7 percent if none were treated. So treating hep C was associated with a 20 percent reduced risk of death over the span of a decade.

“These findings highlight the need for addressing the hepatitis C epidemic in this population, perhaps by expanding access to direct-acting antiviral medications,” says study author Alex Breskin, PhD, a postdoctoral scholar in epidemiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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