Interferon, High Blood Pressure May be Risk to Vision

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People living with hepatitis C virus (HCV) and who have high blood pressure should see an eye specialist while undergoing therapy with pegylated interferon-based regimens, concludes an Italian study published in the August issue of Hepatology. According to the research, which involved performing ophthalmologic examinations on 97 individuals being treated for HCV, retinopathy—a disease of the retina—was documented in nearly one-third (30.9 percent) of individuals participating in the study. The sight-threatening complication was most common among people with pre-existing eye problems and, notably, among those with high blood pressure. "Retinopathy is frequent during treatment with [pegylated interferon and ribavirin], especially in hypertensive patients, who may develop serious complications," the authors conclude. "Screening for [pegylated interferon]-associated retinopathy should be recommended for HCV patients with hypertension.

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