Latinos Respond Less Well to HCV Treatment

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HIV-negative Latinos are less likely to respond to hepatitis C virus (HCV) treatment than HIV-negative white non-Latino patients, according to a study presented at the 43rd Annual Meeting of the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) in Milan, and reported May 19 by the National AIDS Treatment Advocacy Project (NATAP).

Though several studies have documented a difference in HCV treatment response rates between black and white patients—with black patients responding at about half the rate as white patients—few studies have examined response rates among Latinos. To examine possible differences, Maribel Rodriguez-Torres, MD, from the Fundación de Investigación de Diego, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and her colleagues compared treatment response rates in 269 Latino and 300 white non-Latino patients, all of whom had HCV genotype 1. The patients were similar in every characteristic except for ethnicity.

All patients were treated with 48 weeks of pegylated-interferon and ribavirin. Treatment success was defined as an undetectable HCV viral load six months after completing treatment, also known as a sustained virologic response (SVR).

Roughly half (50 percent) of the non-Latino patients achieved an SVR, compared with approximately 35 percent of the Latino patients. This difference was statistically significant, meaning that it was too great to have occurred by chance. Latinos were also more likely to drop out of the study due to early treatment failure.

The authors are encouraging that more studies be conducted to further examine the differences in HCV treatment response rates.

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