Men With Hep C May Experience Low Testosterone

Researchers found that free testosterone levels were low even after successful treatment for hep C.

February 20, 2019 By Benjamin Ryan

Men living with hepatitis C virus (HCV) commonly experience low levels of free testosterone and do not see a significant improvement after curing the virus, Healio reports.

Previous research has found that hep C is associated with low total testosterone (TT), low free testosterone (FT) and higher sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG).

Publishing their findings in Clinical Infectious Diseases, researchers enrolled 327 men with hep C in a prospective longitudinal cohort study, including 150 men who were coinfected with HIV. They also studied 85 men for whom they had results of testosterone level tests taken before hep C treatment as well as after the men were cured of the virus.

The participants were followed for a median of 36 months.

Compared with the men who were cured of hep C, those with an active infection had higher TT and SHBG. FT levels were comparable between the two groups.

Those who were cured were more likely to have low TT compared with those who had active hep C. Half of those with active infection and 42 percent of those who had been cured of the virus had low FT.

Among those who were cured of the virus, clearing hep C was associated with a decrease in TT and SHBG. However, FT did not change. Fifty-eight percent of the men had low FT before being cured, compared with 54 percent afterward, a difference that was not statistically significant, meaning it could have been driven by chance.

Independent factors that predicted a change in FT after the men cleared hep C included having HIV coinfection and experiencing a change in the ratio of AST liver enzymes to platelets.

The study authors theorized that the higher SHBG levels seen before men were cured were masking low levels of testosterone.

To read the Healio article, click here.

To read the study, click here.

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