Yes, Curing Hep C Is Tied to Better Health and Survival

Some experts have doubted the link between sustained virologic response and clinical outcomes.

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Countering experts who have doubted that curing hepatitis C virus (HCV) promotes better health and survival outcomes, a new study of more than 1,000 people has concluded that achieving a cure did in fact lower the risk of death and negative health outcomes, Healio reports.

Publishing their findings in Clinical Infectious Diseases, Jordan J. Feld, MD, MPH, of the University of Toronto Health Network, and colleagues analyzed data on people starting hep C treatment with interferon or direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) between June 2006 and December 2016.

The study looked for evidence of a collection of health outcomes, including the development of decompensated cirrhosis (the more advanced form of the severe liver disease), hepatocellular carcinoma (the most common form of liver cancer) and liver transplantation as well as death from any cause.

To control for the severity of liver disease, the study included only those considered eligible to take interferon, according to criteria established in a previous trial of the therapy.

Altogether, the 1,078 people with HCV received 1,306 rounds of hep C treatment. Fifty-two percent of the individuals received interferon and 49% received DAAs. Ninety-seven percent of those who received DAAs and 52% of those who received interferon achieved a sustained virologic response (SVR) 12 weeks after completing therapy, considered a cure.

Twenty-four months after completing treatment, 99% of those in the interferon group and 97% in the DAA group who achieved an SVR survived without experiencing any of the major health outcomes or death. Among those who did not achieve an SVR, the respective rates were 96% and 75%.

After 24 months, 1.1% of those who received DAAs and 3.4% of those who received interferon experienced one of the major health outcomes. The study authors concluded that this finding was a reflection of how the higher SVR rate among those who took DAAs helped drive down the rate of major health outcomes.

To read the Healio article, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

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