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Better blood sugar control in people with diabetes after HCV has been cured

Many people who have been living with chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) also have other health issues, such as type 2 diabetes. In 2015, researchers at the University of Turin, Italy, sought to assess the impact on type 2 diabetes once HCV was cured with modern all-oral HCV treatment, otherwise known as direct-acting antivirals, or DAAs.

Researchers recruited 122 people, most of whom (101) subsequently became cured of HCV. The researchers found that people who were cured underwent “significant improvement” in blood sugar levels. As a result of the decrease in blood sugar levels, in many cases participants’ doctors were able to reduce the dose of medicines used to help control blood sugar.

Study details

The average profile of participants upon entering the study was as follows:

- 70% men, 30% women
- age – 61 years
- smokers – 22%
- higher-than-normal blood pressure (hypertension) – 40%
- previous diagnosis of liver cancer – 6%
- all participants had extensive scarring of their liver (cirrhosis)

Participants were monitored for between 24 and 36 weeks (before, during and after treatment cessation).

Results

Researchers divided participants into two groups, as follows:

- 101 people who were cured
- 21 people who were not cured—nine of whom were not cured despite the use of DAAs and 12 others who were not offered treatment during the study

Researchers found that, on average, blood sugar levels (taken when participants had fasted overnight) fell significantly after cure was achieved.

Furthermore, 37% of cured people were able to reduce their dose of diabetes medicine after cure was achieved. In contrast, among people who were not cured, only 5% were subsequently able to reduce their dose of diabetes medicine.

On average, after being cured, people gained about 3 kilograms in weight. Among those who were not cured, their weight did not change significantly during the study.

Although this was not a randomized clinical trial, the overall results suggest an additional aspect of improved health—better control of blood sugar—among some people who were cured of HCV.

—Sean R. Hosein

REFERENCE:

Ciancio A, Bosio R, Bo S, et al. Marked improvement of glycaemic control in diabetic patients with chronic hepatitis C achieving sustained virological response after direct-acting antiviral therapy: results of a prospective controlled

study. In: Program and abstracts of the *International Liver Congress* , 19-23 April 2017, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Poster 221.

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