

Pancreatic, liver disease shift up on risk list

23 May 2014, by Stasia Thompson

Money changes everything. To date, lung, breast, prostate and colorectal cancers have accounted for the largest number of cancer deaths. In response, these cancers currently receive the most research funding from the National Cancer Institute and are highlighted through public health campaigns, special event fundraising and celebrity spokespeople.

And the extra money and attention is working to end those cancers and move other cancers up in frequency of cause of death.

Cancer Research reports that, "By 2030 more people will be diagnosed with breast, prostate and lung cancers than with pancreatic cancers, but more [pancreatic cancer](#) and liver cancer patients will die of their disease."

What should people do? Get screened if you are at risk.

"Primary liver cancer, also called hepatocellular carcinoma, is curable when caught early, so if you have high risk factors such as cirrhosis, particularly cirrhosis from the hepatitis C virus, you should get screened," said Steve Scaglione, MD, board certified hepatologist at Loyola University Health System. Hepatologists are specialists in treating [liver disease](#).

"Unlike a colonoscopy, liver cancer screening is noninvasive. It's just an ultrasound, every six months," he said.

If liver cancer is diagnosed, curative treatment options are available, including surgery and [liver transplantation](#).

There are more than 100 kinds of liver disease, including cirrhosis, alcoholic-induced liver disease, [fatty liver disease](#) and hepatitis. Hepatitis C is the leading cause of [liver cancer](#) in America. More than 5 million people are living with hepatitis, which has been called a silent epidemic because it often is not detected until it has spread to the liver.

Screening for hepatitis C is not only recommended by public health organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention but is urged by lawmakers. In Colorado, a bill was signed into law on May 20, 2014, funding hepatitis screening. Specifically, hepatitis C testing is recommended for baby boomers (those born between 1945 and 1964) because they are estimated to be five times more likely to have contracted the disease.

The Loyola hepatology team offers treatment at 11 Loyola locations in Illinois and also conducts research and research trials to improve prevention and treatment.

"As new resources are devoted to these less common but more deadly forms of cancer, there is a higher likelihood of research advances to improve patient outcomes," said Susan Uprichard, PhD, associate professor and director of hepatology research at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. "Patients who seek treatment from an academic medical center such as Loyola have the advantage of not only receiving the most progressive care, but they also have the potential to participate in life-saving research trials."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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