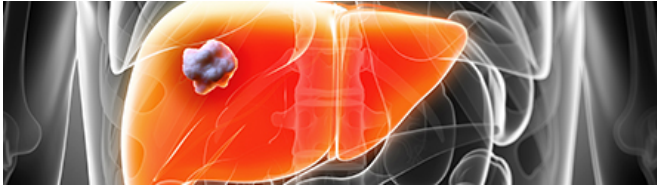


Risk of liver cancer low in patients with cirrhosis, study finds

1 February 2017, by Emma Thorne



Credit: University of Nottingham

The results of a study by researchers at The University of Nottingham suggest that the risk of liver cancer in patients with cirrhosis may be much lower than previously thought.

Liver cancer – or [hepatocellular carcinoma](#) (HCC) – is one of the most serious complications of cirrhosis, or scarring of the liver, caused by long-term liver damage.

However, an analysis of health records, published in the academic journal *Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics*, found that the 10-year incidence of HCC in UK patients with cirrhosis is actually only four per cent, or lower.

Joe West, Professor of Epidemiology in the University's School of Medicine, led the study and believes that the results could better inform doctors on how best to focus resources for the benefit of patients with liver damage.

He said: "This very low incidence of HCC occurrence in people with cirrhosis caused by alcohol or of unknown origin suggests that surveillance for HCC among these groups is likely to benefit patients little.

"As surveillance incurs substantial cost, it is therefore unlikely to represent value for money for the NHS. There may well be other ways of spending this money that would benefit patients far

more."

Cirrhosis is caused by long-term damage to the liver, which leads to a build-up of scar tissue which replaces healthy tissue and eventually can result in [liver failure](#).

The researchers identified more than 3,000 patients with cirrhosis of the liver using the UK's General Practice Research Database between 1987 and 2006 and then cross-referenced this information with diagnoses of HCC on linked national cancer registries.

The study found that only 1.2 per cent of patients with [alcoholic cirrhosis](#) and 1.1 per cent of [patients](#) with cirrhosis of unknown cause will develop HCC within a decade. The highest 10-year incidence of HCC was among those with [cirrhosis](#) due to chronic viral hepatitis (four per cent).

More information: J. West et al, Risk of hepatocellular carcinoma among individuals with different aetiologies of cirrhosis: a population-based cohort study, *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* (2017). DOI: 10.1111/apt.13961

Provided by University of Nottingham

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