CLINICAL PRESENTATION OF CHRONIC LIVER DISEASE IN GERMANY: ROLE OF ETIOLOGY, AGE AND GENDER

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RESULTS:

• Based on ALT/AST screening between 12/2008 and 12/2010, 3161 patients with elevated liver enzymes were identified by 19 German hospitals and gastroenterological practices.

• Clinical presentations by symptoms (asymptomatic vs symptomatic [e.g., fatigue, pruritus, arthralgia, abdominal pain/discomfort, weak concentration]) were retrospectively analyzed by gender, age, and HCV status.

• Only patients with information on HCV status were included (N = 2400).

• Fatigue was the most common symptom in both groups with a higher frequency of 49 % compared to 34.7 % in patients with/without HCV (p < 0.001) and increased only slightly with increasing age from 46.7 % and 35.8 % (<50 years) to 64.4 % (p = 0.02) and 40.6 % (>50 years; P = 0.10) (Table 1).

• The frequency of symptoms was comparable in female and male patients. Only arthralgia occurred more frequently in females with chronic HCV infection while the frequency of abdominal pain/discomfort was slightly higher in female patients with HCV-negative liver disease (Table 2).

• In contrast, patients without HCV showed a 2-fold higher frequency of abdominal pain/discomfort (26.4%) compared to HCV patients (13.2%), P < 0.0001 with a maximum of 34.2% in patients >50 years (Figure 3).

• The present study demonstrates a high frequency (>40%) of asymptomatic chronic liver disease in the German population.

• The frequency of symptoms seems to be determined by aetiology of liver disease and age rather than by gender.

• Our results confirm a particularly high prevalence of fatigue in patients with chronic HCV infection.

Background:

• Many patients with chronic liver disease are asymptomatic or may have nonspecific symptoms such as fatigue in the absence of hepatic synthetic dysfunction.

• Information regarding the presentation of chronic liver disease in Germany is still scarce.

• We investigated the frequency of asymptomatic and symptomatic presentations of chronic liver disease according to HCV status, gender and age.

Methods:

• Of 2400 patients with chronic liver disease N = 1018 had chronic HCV infection while the frequency of abdominal pain/discomfort was slightly higher in female patients with HCV-negative liver disease.

• In contrast, patients without HCV showed a 2-fold higher frequency of abdominal pain/discomfort (26.4%) compared to HCV patients (13.2%), P < 0.0001 with a maximum of 34.2% in patients >50 years (Figure 3).

Results:

• The present study demonstrates a high frequency (>40%) of asymptomatic chronic liver disease in the German population.

• The frequency of symptoms seems to be determined by aetiology of liver disease and age rather than by gender.

• Our results confirm a particularly high prevalence of fatigue in patients with chronic HCV infection.

Conclusions:

• The present study demonstrates a high frequency (>40%) of asymptomatic chronic liver disease in the German population.

• The frequency of symptoms seems to be determined by aetiology of liver disease and age rather than by gender.

• Our results confirm a particularly high prevalence of fatigue in patients with chronic HCV infection.

TABLE 1: Age-Dependent Presentation of Chronic Liver Disease – Symptomatic Patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age/50 years</th>
<th>HCV-positive (% n/N)</th>
<th>HCV-negative (% n/N)</th>
<th>P*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>48.7 (321/688)</td>
<td>54.1 (175/321)</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdominal pain/discomfort</td>
<td>14.8 (96/688)</td>
<td>17.0 (55/321)</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak concentration</td>
<td>9.3 (35/380)</td>
<td>11.2 (37/332)</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight loss</td>
<td>6.4 (44/688)</td>
<td>6.3 (20/321)</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pruritus</td>
<td>7.5 (54/380)</td>
<td>7.3 (27/332)</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 2: Gender-Dependent Presentation of Chronic Liver Disease – Symptomatic Patients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>P*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>49.5 (127/259)</td>
<td>48.9 (29/60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdominal pain/discomfort</td>
<td>14.7 (23/159)</td>
<td>11.7 (2/18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak concentration</td>
<td>8.4 (20/239)</td>
<td>11.4 (7/61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight loss</td>
<td>5.6 (34/609)</td>
<td>7.0 (41/588)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pruritus</td>
<td>6.0 (36/609)</td>
<td>11.4 (67/588)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE 2: Age-Dependent Presentation of Chronic Liver Disease – Asymptomatic Patients

FIGURE 4: Gender-Dependent Presentation of Chronic Liver Disease – Asymptomatic Patients

FIGURE 3: Presentation of Liver Disease Depends on Aetiology

FIGURE 5: Distribution of Chronic Liver Disease

• Liver disease was asymptomatic in 42.7 % and 43.4 % of patients with/without HCV and declined from 45.3 % and 47.7 % to 37.1 % (P = 0.013) and 31.9 % (P < 0.0001) in patients <50 years/>50 years (Figure 2).

• Asymptomatic presentation occurred more frequently in HCV-negative male patients but did not differ between female and male patients with chronic HCV infection (Figure 4).