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PHARMACOLOGY

5 DISEASE CONDITIONS OF THE LIVER

1. CIRRHOSIS

Cirrhosis is the scarring of the liver – hard scar tissue replaces soft healthy tissue. It is caused by swelling and inflammation. As cirrhosis becomes worse, the liver will have less healthy tissue. If cirrhosis is not treated, the liver will fail and will not be able to work well or at all. Cirrhosis is caused by chronic (long-term) liver diseases that damage liver tissue. It can take many years for liver damage to lead to cirrhosis.

There are usually no symptoms of cirrhosis in its early stage. Over time, cirrhosis may cause symptoms and complications:

SYMPTOMS; tiredness, nausea, Weight loss, Abdominal pain, Spider-like blood vessels, Severe itching, loss of appetite.

COMPLICATIONS;

Jaundice, a yellow discoloration of the skin and whites of the eyes

Bruising and bleeding easily

Fluid build-up and painful swelling of the legs (edema) and abdomen (ascites)

Hepatic Encephalopathy (HE), a build-up of toxins in the brain that causes confusion, as well as both mental and physical complications

Liver Cancer

CIRRHOSIS can be managed by maintaining a healthy life style, avoiding raw shellfish, stop drinking alcohol, practice safe sex, talk to your doctor about every medications, vitamins and supplements you take.

1. HEPATITIS A

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by the hepatitis A virus (HAV). HAV causes the liver to swell and prevents it from working well. HAV usually goes away on its own in almost all cases with no serious complications. However, HAV may cause some patients to suffer liver failure.

Low energy is the most common symptom of HAV. Other symptoms include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, headache, itchy skin, muscle soreness, pain near the liver, and jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes). The symptoms can occur two to seven weeks after infection and are often mild. Hepatitis A is diagnosed by a blood test.

1. HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is a high preventable liver disease caused by the hepatitis B virus (HBV). HBV causes the liver to swell and prevents it from working well. Infants born to mothers infected with HBV are at high risk of developing chronic HBV. Chronic HBV can lead to cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, and liver failure. Symptoms, when they occur, may include: Fever, Dark Urine, Joint Pain, Weakness and Fatigue, Loss of Appetite, Nausea and Vomiting, Abdominal pain near the liver.

On average, symptoms appear three months after exposure to the virus, but they can appear anywhere between six weeks and six months. Symptoms usually last for a few weeks, but can last up to six months. Most adults infected with HBV recover fully even if their signs and symptoms are severe.

1. LIVER CANCER

Liver cancer is the growth and spread of unhealthy cells in the liver. Cancer that starts in the liver is called primary liver cancer. Cancer that spreads to the liver from another organ is called metastatic liver cancer. Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the most common type of primary liver cancer.

Symptoms may include fatigue, bloating, pain on the right side of the upper abdomen or back and shoulder, nausea, loss of appetite, feelings of fullness, weight loss, weakness, fever, and jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and the skin).

It can be treated by transplant if the cancer has not spread. Surgery can also be used if the cancer has been found early and the rest of the liver is healthy, then a surgery can be done to remove the tumor (partial hepatectomy).

1. LIVER CYSTS

Liver cysts are abnormal sacs filled with fluid in the liver.

The cause of most liver cysts is unknown. Liver cysts can be present at birth or can develop at a later time. They usually grow slowly and are not detected until adulthood. Some cysts are caused by a parasite, echinococcus that is found in sheep in different parts of the world. Most liver cysts do not cause any symptoms. However, if cysts become large, they can cause bloating and pain in the upper right part of your abdomen. Sometimes, liver cysts become large enough that you can feel them through your abdomen.

Liver cysts can have rare complications of liver failure and liver cancer. Most liver cysts do not need to be treated. However, if cysts get large and painful, they may need to be drained or surgically removed. Cysts also may be surgically removed if they are stopping bile from reaching your intestine. If a parasite is found, antibiotics are used for treatment.

**Why do we have the portal vein or the liver receiving more blood from the vein than it receives from the artery?**

Portal veins are larger, blood-filled spaces with a thin to inapparent vessel wall. Hepatic arteries are smaller in diameter but have a well-developed smooth muscle wall. The portal vein supplies the majority of blood to the liver. The portal circulation is a venous system that drains blood from the gastrointestinal tract, gall bladder, spleen, and pancreas. Venous blood coming from the gastrointestinal tract contains not only digested nutrients, but also toxins and, frequently, microbes. A major role of the liver in receiving this portal circulation is to metabolize these nutrients and eliminate or mitigate these toxins and microbes.