

Discussion # 9

Cirrhosis of the liver is a chronic disease in which the normal liver cells get damaged and destroyed by different factors. Once normal cells are destroyed, their place takes connective tissue and collagen. Actually, this is the scar tissue. This disease develops silently and gradually. Patients are not aware of it until it reaches late stage. The causes for liver cirrhosis are chronic alcohol intake, chronic hepatitis B and C, biliary stasis and others. During this process liver loses its ability to function properly. Production of albumin decreases and oncotic pressure is changed which gives edema. Production of clotting factors is decreased and bruises can occur. Cirrhotic liver develops structural changes and because of that, blood circulation is disturbed. For that reason venous varices develop in the esophagus, GI veins and superficial veins around umbilicus (caput medusae). Splenomegaly can develop and ascites as a result. Liver cannot eliminate bilirubin and jaundice will occur. Liver cannot detoxify any more and ammonia accumulates. High level of ammonia will cause encephalopathy with changes in mental status called asterixis. Clinical symptoms are fatigue, easily bruising, vascular spider angiomas, red palms, clubbing of the fingers. Also there is loss of appetite, indigestion, flatulence, nausea, loss of body weight, muscle waist, abdominal pain. Liver is very hard on palpation. Diagnostics are high levels of ALT and AST.

References

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