

# Alcohol abuse history influences quality of life following liver transplant

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A history of alcohol abuse significantly impacts quality of life for patients after liver transplant, according to researchers at Henry Ford Hospital.

"Transplant recipients with alcoholic cirrhosis experienced less improvement in physical quality of life and reported greater pain and physical limitations than non-alcoholics after transplant surgery," says Anne Eshelman, Ph.D., Henry Ford Behavioral Health Services, lead author of the study.

"Understanding alcoholic and nonalcoholic patients' post-transplant change in quality of life may assist in treatment planning. Our results suggest that better interventions to improve [pain tolerance](#), mobilize support, and help patients rebuild their lives after transplantation may improve quality of life in this high-risk population."

Study results were published in the most recent issue of *Transplant Proceedings*.

A sample of 65 end-stage [liver disease](#) patients were surveyed before and after [liver transplantation](#) for physical and mental health quality of life using the SF-36 Physical Health Summary and Mental Health Summary. Baseline data was collected prior to transplant and follow-up data was collected at one and six months after transplantation.

Results indicate physical quality of life did not improve significantly

between one- and six-month follow-up for patients with alcohol abuse history.

By contrast, mental health quality improved significantly between baseline and one-month follow-up, but not between one- and six-month follow-up. No significant differences were found on the Mental Health Summary index based on alcohol abuse history for either time period.

"For liver transplant patients, improvements in psychosocial functioning and quality of life precede improvements in physical quality of life. We found that weakened physical quality of life improvements for patients with [alcohol abuse](#) histories are related to greater pain and physical deficits," explains Dr. Eshelman.

"Some alcoholics may have lower pain thresholds and may have used substances for self-medication for both physical and emotional pain, and post-transplant, they may have less effective coping strategies to manage pain."

According to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network, more than 6,000 people undergo transplant surgery each year and there are nearly 17,000 people currently waiting for liver transplant.

Provided by Henry Ford Health System

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