

Antiviral therapy may prevent liver cancer in hepatitis B patients

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Researchers have found that antiviral therapy may be successful in preventing hepatitis B virus from developing into the most common form of liver cancer, hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC).

That was the finding of a study published in the May issue of *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology*. Investigators from Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, Geisinger Health System in Danville, Pa., and Kaiser Permanente in Honolulu, Hawaii and Portland, Ore. participated in the study, along with investigators from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

According to the first-of-its-kind analysis of more than 2,600 adult participants with [hepatitis B](#), those treated with antiviral therapy had a significantly lower occurrence of HCC during a five-year follow up period. Overall, 3 percent of patients developed HCC during the study's timeframe. But patients who received antiviral therapy were 60 percent less likely to develop HCC than untreated patients.

"The results of this study allow us to reassure our patients that we are not just treating their viral levels, but that antiviral therapy may actually lessen their chance of developing [liver cancer](#)," said the study's lead investigator, Henry Ford Health System's Stuart C. Gordon, M.D., who worked closely with Henry Ford Senior Scientist Mei Lu in Detroit.

HCC accounts for the most liver cancers in the United States, typically occurs in people age 50 or older and is more common in men. If the

cancer cannot be removed, it is usually fatal in three to six months. In most cases, HCC is caused by scarring in the liver – cirrhosis – which can be a result of alcohol abuse, hepatitis B or C, chronic inflammation of the liver or an iron overload.

"This study was one of the first to address antiviral therapy and its efficacy in preventing hepatitis B from developing into liver cancer," said Joseph Boscarino, Ph.D., senior scientist and investigator for the Geisinger site. "With this information, clinicians can begin to prescribe [antiviral therapy](#) for hepatitis B [patients](#) with the goal of preventing a common and dangerous form of cancer."

Provided by Henry Ford Health System

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