Hepatitis C Coinfection Complicates HIV Care

BY DIANA MAHONEY

MONTREAL — HIV patients who are coinfected with the hepatitis C virus have significantly higher rates of health care utilization and disability days than do those with HIV alone.

The findings, according to lead investigator Benjamin Linas of Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital, "suggest that hepatitis C coinfection generates substantial additional burdens on the system of care for HIV-infected patients."

With an estimated prevalence of up to 30%, hepatitis C virus (HCV) coinfection is a growing cause of morbidity and mortality in HIV-infected patients, Dr. Linas said at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections.

To assess the public health burden of coinfection in this population, he and his colleagues analyzed data from the National Institutes of Health–sponsored AIDS Clinical Trials Group (ACTG) Longitudinal Linked Randomized Trials cohort. The cohort of 3,087 patients was predominantly male (83%) and had a median age of 39 years. The median CD4 cell count at enrollment was 244 cells/mm^3.

Of the full cohort, 359 (12%) were coinfected with HCV. When coinfected patients were compared with monoinfected patients, "the adjusted rate ratios for nights spent in the hospital, emergency department visits, and disability days were 1.9, 1.7, and 1.4, respectively," he said.

"HIV/HCV coinfected patients can expect 1.5- to 2-times higher rates of hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and disability days than would be expected from a similar population of HIV monoinfected patients," he said.

Dr. Linas reported having no relevant financial disclosures. ■