

COVID-19 Vaccination in Chronic Liver Disease

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Overall, more than 212 million cases of COVID-19 has been reported globally with nearly 4.5 million deaths [1]. WHO has identified those with chronic liver disease as a vulnerable group. Many of the patients with chronic liver disease go in for decompensation and acute on chronic liver failure after getting infected with COVID-19. It is seen not only immediately after COVID-19 infection but even months after getting cleared of the infection, the mechanism of which is yet to be understood.

As a result of this, global societies like European association for the study of the liver (EASL) and American Association for the study of liver diseases (AASLD) have come out with the statements supporting prompt vaccination of patients with chronic liver disease. mRNA vaccines, adenoviral vector vaccines and protein subunit vaccines are being used at present. Post vaccination data among liver disease patients is scarce.

At present, there are no indications for stopping medicines including immunosuppressants and antivirals before administering the vaccine. There are expert opinions suggesting the delaying of vaccination for atleast 3months post liver transplantation [2,3]. In such cases, rather than delaying the vaccination, these persons may take the vaccine before transplantation. In patients with hepatocellular carcinoma, there is no recommendation for stopping locoregional or systemic therapy prior to vaccination [3].

The efficacy of the vaccines in liver disease especially in those with alcoholic hepatitis, autoimmune hepatitis, decompensated cirrhosis, autoimmune hepatitis and acute on chronic liver failure need to be studied as there is already an immunological dysfunction in these groups of patients. Also, the adverse events of the vaccination including the fatal thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome in these groups should be carefully studied.

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