

Patients with Alcoholic Liver Disease Less Likely to Quit Drinking, According to New Study

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Doctors are now instructing patients diagnosed with alcoholic liver disease (ALD) to abstain from drinking in order to improve their survival by preventing additional liver damage. However, according to a new study, patients with ALD still struggle to follow doctor?s orders and stay sober.

The study, published by a team of Michigan Medicine specialists, takes a look at the misconceptions, preferences, and the many barriers keeping ALD patients from abstinence. The researchers found that about half the study participants (52 people) reported drinking within the past year despite their ALD diagnosis.

13 of these people drank at least once a week, while 12 drank at least three or more drinks per day. Six drank a half dozen or more drinks on a single occasion at least once a week. Even in cases of cirrhosis, where extensive scarring in the liver occurs because of repeated heavy alcohol intake, abstinence remains one of the most effective therapeutic interventions. But this data shows that not all ALD patients are capable of staying sober on their own.

?One drink is too many if one has ALD,? says the lead author of the study, Jessica Mellinger, M.D., who is a

specialist in hepatology, gastroenterology and internal medicine at Michigan Medicine.

The authors of the study believe that there are many different factors that affect a patient?s attitudes toward sobriety.

Alcohol abuse is a nationwide issue. The 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports that 15.1 million US adults have alcohol use disorder. 9.8 million of these are men, while 5.3 million are women. Alcohol use disorder is characterized as compulsive alcohol use despite consequences and side effects. People with AUD often lose control over their alcohol intake, developing tolerance, dependence, and going through withdrawal.

About 60 percent of the participants in the study had never received any form of treatment for their alcohol use disorder. This includes attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

According to G. Scott Winder, M.D., assistant professor in the Department of Psychiatry and one of the study authors, it has something to do with the patient?s perception of treatment. ?Their perception is they don?t think that alcohol use disorder treatment works,? he says.

Participants are likely to think of treatment as a waste of time and even ?a big joke?, according to the study.

Other patients with ALD felt as if they had already kicked the habit and so they no longer think professional treatment is necessary. Many participants didn?t seem to realize that alcohol use disorder is often a chronic disease that can lead to relapse.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, a third of people who are treated for alcohol problems have no further symptoms a year later. Many others substantially reduce their drinking and report fewer alcohol-related problems.

Other participants refused to abstain because they believe it was ?too late? because the liver disease was already present. As a result, they think that treatment for alcohol use disorder is futile.

?It was interesting how people from small towns shy away from group therapy because they want to maintain some anonymity,? Mellinger says.

More patients believe that support groups will only help them meet a new drinking buddy. These misconceptions act as barriers toward safe and effective treatment.

?A study like this helps us understand better how to help those with alcohol use disorder,? Winder says. Click

the link to see Fort Worth's top rehab placement programs.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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