

### Question 21 – Week of December 31

The following statements regarding minimal hepatic encephalopathy (MHE) are true except?:

- A. It is only detectable by neuropsychiatric testing
- B. It is associated with increased risk of overt hepatic encephalopathy in cirrhotic patients
- C. MHE is associated with impaired driving skills
- D. The diagnosis of MHE is dependent on elevated arterial ammonia levels
- E. Treatment of MHE may be associated with improvement in quality of life

**Answer: D**

MHE is by definition subclinical and requires neuropsychiatric testing for diagnosis, however, the diagnostic criteria do not include blood ammonia measurement, and the presence and severity of MHE have been shown to be independent of ammonia concentration. (1) Patients with MHE have been shown to have impaired driving skills and fitness to drive. (2)

References:

Shawcross DL, Wright G, Olde Damink SW, Jalan R. Role of ammonia and inflammation in minimal hepatic encephalopathy. *Metab Brain Dis.* 2007 Mar;22(1):125-38.

Wein C, Koch H, Popp B, Oehler G, Schauder P. Minimal hepatic encephalopathy impairs fitness to drive. *Hepatology.* 2004 Mar;39(3):739-45.