

### Question 17 – November 25

The following statements about Hepatitis D Virus (HDV) are true except?

- A. HDV is considered the most severe form of viral hepatitis in humans
- B. At least 5% of HBV carriers worldwide are estimated to be infected with HDV.
- C. HDV superinfection in an HBV carrier can lead to severe hepatitis and acute decompensation of preexisting liver disease.
- D. A diagnosis of acute HDV infection is established by demonstrating IGM anti-HDV in the serum.
- E. Nucleos(t)ide analogs, currently the mainstay of treatment for HBV are also effective against HDV infection.

**Answer: E**

The only therapeutic option currently available for HDV is interferon alpha, the efficacy of which is related to dose and duration of treatment. Better results have been reported with peginterferon alpha, both in interferon-naïve patients and previous nonresponders to conventional interferon- $\alpha$ . Doses of 1.5 ug/kg of peginterferon alfa-2b and 180 ug of peginterferon alfa-2a have been used successfully. Current recommendations from an Italian workshop include the use of pegylated interferon alpha for 48 to 72 weeks<sup>(1,2)</sup>. Nucleos(t)ide analogs, currently the mainstay of treatment for HBV infection, are not effective in HDV infection. The lack of efficacy of nucleos(t)ide analogs may be explained in part by the observation that nucleos(t)ide analogs seldom lead to disappearance of HBsAg, the only HBV protein that is required by HDV.

#### References:

1. Farci P, Chessa L, Balistrieri C, et al. Treatment of chronic hepatitis D. *J Viral Hepatitis* 2007; 14(Suppl 1):58-63.
2. Alessia Ciancio & Mario Rizzetto. Hepatitis: PEG-IFN for the treatment of hepatitis D. *Nature Reviews Gastroenterology and Hepatology*.2011; 8, 304-306