

LIVER TRANSPLANTATION

Long-term cognitive function improved in MHE after liver transplantation

In patients with minimal hepatic encephalopathy (MHE), short-term improvements in cognitive function following a liver transplantation are maintained in the long term, according to an Italian research group.

“Very few studies have investigated the effect of liver transplantation on cognitive disease after more than 2–3 years from the surgery,” explains lead author Katia Mattarozzi (University of Bologna, Italy). “The results of our prior work encouraged us to recall patients after 7–10 years.”

The researchers recalled 12 patients from their previous study to undergo neuropsychological evaluation. These results were then compared to the results of tests conducted 6–18 months after the surgery.

In general, the improvements seen shortly after surgery were maintained in the long term. Difficulties with

supramodal cognitive functions, which were still present in the first study, improved after 10 years. Improvements in visuospatial short-term memory and verbal learning showed some fluctuation. However, the authors note that they did not compare the findings in patients who had MHE with healthy controls, so it is difficult to draw firm conclusions.

Although having a liver transplant and long-term use of immunosuppressants is a serious undertaking, the authors conclude that this strategy results in notable long-term improvements in cognitive function in these patients.

Claire Greenhill

Original article Mattarozzi, K. *et al.* Minimal hepatic encephalopathy: follow-up 10 years after successful liver transplantation. *Transplantation* doi:10.1097/TP0b013e318244f734