

IN BRIEF

HEPATITIS B

A prospective and open-label study for the efficacy and safety of telbivudine in pregnancy for the prevention of perinatal transmission of hepatitis B virus infection

Han, G.-R. *et al. J. Hepatol.* doi:10.1016/j.hep.2011.02.032

The use of telbivudine during pregnancy in patients with chronic hepatitis B can safely reduce perinatal transmission of HBV. In 135 highly viremic patients who received this therapy, a marked reduction in serum HBV DNA and HBeAg levels occurred before delivery. 7 months after birth, rate of perinatal transmission was shown to be significantly lower in infants born to treated mothers than in those born to untreated mothers.

HEPATITIS C

Impact of insulin resistance on sustained response in HCV patients treated with pegylated interferon and ribavirin: a meta-analysis

Deltenre, P. *et al. J. Hepatol.* doi:10.1016/j.hep.2011.03.010

Insulin resistance has an influence on sustained virologic response (SVR) in patients with HCV infection. Analysis of 14 studies involving 2,732 patients revealed that those with insulin resistance have a 20% lower SVR than those without insulin resistance.

LIVER

High-resolution characterization of a hepatocellular carcinoma genome

Totoki, Y. *et al. Nat. Genet.* doi:10.1038/ng.804

Parallel sequencing of a primary HCV-positive hepatocellular carcinoma and matched lymphocytes from the same individual has yielded the first high-resolution characterization of a virus-associated cancer genome. Further analysis including gene annotation enrichment and whole-exome sequencing enabled the identification of previously uncharacterized mutation patterns, intrachromosomal rearrangements and fusion genes, and genetic heterogeneity within the tumor.

CONSTIPATION

Colonic mast cells in controls and slow transit constipation patients

Salerni, B. *Aliment. Pharmacol. Ther.* doi:10.1111/j.1365-2036.2011.04684.x

Patients with severe constipation have an increased density of colonic mast cells compared with healthy individuals, further supporting the notion that such cells have an important role in gastrointestinal visceral hypersensitivity and motor activity. Evaluation of full thickness biopsy specimens taken from the colons of 29 patients undergoing surgery for slow transit constipation and healthy controls revealed significantly higher numbers of mast cells in those with constipation. Both groups showed a fairly homogenous distribution of these cells within the viscus.