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IN BRIEF

HEPATITIS

Proliferation of liver progenitor cells and alcoholic hepatitis

This study indicates that liver progenitor cell markers are upregulated in patients with alcoholic hepatitis. Notably, *EpCAM*, *Prominin1* and *Keratin7* expression was significantly increased in alcoholic hepatitis compared with in normal livers, chronic hepatitis C or HCV-induced cirrhosis. *Keratin7* expression also correlated with disease severity, and *Keratin7* and *Prominin1* (but not *EpCAM*) could independently predict mortality at 90 days.

Original article Sancho-Bru, P. *et al.* Liver progenitor cell markers correlate with liver damage and predict short-term mortality in patients with alcoholic hepatitis. *Hepatology* doi:10.1002/hep.25614

BIOMARKERS

Noninvasive diagnosis and screening of atrophic gastritis

Sung and colleagues have provided a rationale for noninvasive screening of atrophic gastritis with stomach-specific biomarkers. For example, plasma levels of pepsinogen I and/or the pepsinogen I:pepsinogen II ratio are always low in atrophic gastritis of the corpus and fundus. In addition, fasting levels of gastrin-17 are high in atrophic gastritis of the corpus and fundus, but low or not elevated if the gastritis is in the antrum and corpus.

Original article Agréus, L. *et al.* Rationale in diagnosis and screening of atrophic gastritis with stomach-specific plasma biomarkers. *Scand. J. Gastroenterol.* **47**, 136–147 (2012)

HEPATOCELLULAR CARCINOMA

IL28B polymorphism involved in HCV-related carcinogenesis

Genotyping determined the presence of the IL28B polymorphism (C>T; rs12979860) in 167 HCV-positive patients post-transplantation, 61 of whom had hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) in the explanted liver. The TT genotype was more frequent in patients with HCC. Median α-fetoprotein (AFP) levels were almost significantly higher in the presence of the T allele ($P=0.052$), and the genotype distribution differed significantly for AFP-negative and AFP-positive HCCs. The T allele was also significantly associated with failure of antiviral therapy and post-transplant fibrosis progression.

Original article Eurich, D. *et al.* Role of IL28B polymorphism in the development of hepatitis c virus-induced hepatocellular carcinoma, graft fibrosis, and posttransplant antiviral therapy. *Transplantation* doi:10.1097/TP.0b013e318244f774

COLORECTAL CANCER

Variable gradient in stem-cell number and Wnt activity influences regional tumor distribution in the intestinal tract

Leedham *et al.* found a graduated neoplastic response in mice expressing temporally controlled, stabilized β-catenin along the crypt–villus axis throughout the intestines, whereas there was an increase in stem and proliferating cell numbers in all regions of the intestine. In normal intestines from humans and mice, stem cell and Wnt gradients differed, but in both they were higher in the small bowel than the large bowel. Expression of some Wnt modulators also varied, and analysis of human tumors confirmed that in different regions of the bowel different *APC* mutation spectra were selected.

Original article Leedham, S. J. *et al.* A basal gradient of Wnt and stem-cell number influences regional tumour distribution in human and mouse intestinal tracts. *Gut* doi:10.1136/gutjnl-2011-301601