**Name of Journal:** *World Journal of Hepatology*

**Manuscript NO:** 64647

**Manuscript Type:** MINIREVIEWS

**Antibiotic prophylaxis in patients with cirrhosis: Current evidence for clinical practice**

Ferrarese A *et al*. Antibiotic prophylaxis in liver disease

Alberto Ferrarese, Nicola Passigato, Caterina Cusumano, Stefano Gemini, Angelo Tonon, Elton Dajti, Giovanni Marasco, Federico Ravaioli, Antonio Colecchia

**Alberto Ferrarese, Nicola Passigato, Caterina Cusumano, Stefano Gemini, Angelo Tonon,** Department of Gastroenterology, Verona University Hospital, Verona 37124, Italy

**Elton Dajti, Federico Ravaioli,** Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences, University of Bologna, Bologna 40138, Italy

**Giovanni Marasco,** Department of Medical and Surgical Sciences, Bologna University Hospital, Bologna 40138, Italy

**Antonio Colecchia,** Unit of Gastroenterology, Borgo Trento University Hospital, Verona 37100, Italy

**Author contributions:** Ferrarese A and Colecchia A participated in research design, performance of the research, data analysis, and writing of the manuscript; Passigato N, Cusumano C, Gemini S, Tonon A, Dajti E, Marasco G, and Ravaioli F participated in research design; All authors have contributed to, read, and approved the manuscript.

**Corresponding author: Alberto Ferrarese, MD,** Department of Gastroenterology, Verona University Hospital, p.le Stefani 1, Verona 37124, Italy. alberto.ferrarese@aovr.veneto.it

**Received:** February 24, 2021

**Revised:** June 8, 2021

**Accepted:** July 28, 2021

**Published online:**

**Abstract**

Patients with cirrhosis show an increased susceptibility to infection due to disease-related immune-dysfunction. Bacterial infection therefore represents a common, often detrimental event in patients with advanced liver disease, since it can worsen portal hypertension and impair the function of hepatic and extra-hepatic organs. Among pharmacological strategies to prevent infection, antibiotic prophylaxis remains the first-choice, especially in high-risk groups, such as patients with acute variceal bleeding, low ascitic fluid proteins, and prior episodes of spontaneous bacterial peritonitis. Nevertheless, antibiotic prophylaxis has to deal with the changing bacterial epidemiology in cirrhosis, with increased rates of gram-positive bacteria and multidrug resistant rods, warnings about quinolones-related side effects, and low prescription adherence. Short-term antibiotic prophylaxis is applied in many other settings during hospitalization, such as before interventional or surgical procedures, but often without knowledge of local bacterial epidemiology and without strict adherence to antimicrobial stewardship. This paper offers a detailed overview on the application of antibiotic prophylaxis in cirrhosis, according to the current evidence.

**Key Words:** Cirrhosis;Quinolones; Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis; Liver transplantation; Trans-jugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt; Variceal bleeding

Ferrarese A, Passigato N, Cusumano C, Gemini S, Tonon A, Dajti E, Marasco G, Ravaioli F, Colecchia A. Antibiotic prophylaxis in patients with cirrhosis: Current evidence for clinical practice. *World J Hepatol* 2021; In press

**Core Tip:** Antibiotic prophylaxis represents a cornerstone for the management of several complications of decompensated cirrhosis, as spontaneous bacterial peritonitis and variceal bleeding. Short-term antibiotic prophylaxis is often applied in many other settings during hospitalization of patients with cirrhosis, such as before interventional or surgical procedures, but often without knowledge of local bacterial epidemiology and without strict adherence to antimicrobial stewardship.

**INTRODUCTION**

Progress has been made on the pathogenetic and prognostic role of bacterial infection (BI) in many clinical settings of liver cirrhosis. Bacterial translocation from the intestinal lumen is now considered key factor for the development and worsening of portal hypertension[1]. Moreover, cirrhotic patients, especially at advanced disease stages, experience an impaired immune-surveillance, with reduced response to pathogens and a contemporary “exhausted” systemic inflammation[2]. Both the high susceptibility to BI and the exaggerated systemic response trigger hepatic and extra-hepatic organs dysfunction, favoring the development of acute-on-chronic liver failure[3], and a sudden worsening of portal hypertension. Therefore, it is not unusual that an episode of BI impairs the natural course of the disease, increasing morbidity, mortality, and the risk of drop-out from the liver transplantation (LT) waiting list[4-6].

The development of aggressive, tailored strategies against BI has become a cornerstone in several fields of hepatology. It has been demonstrated that every hour of inappropriate antibiotic use was associated with 1.9 higher odds of death in patients with cirrhosis and septic shock[7]. Therefore, a timely, adequate antibiotic stewardship, defined as the optimal selection, dosage, and duration of antimicrobial treatment, saves lives.

To date, among pharmacological options, antibiotic prophylaxis appears the most effective preventive measure[8]. Indeed, its wise use has improved prognosis in many settings, such as spontaneous bacterial peritonitis (SBP) or acute variceal bleeding (AVB), becoming standard of care[9].

Nevertheless, the wide and prolonged use of systemic antibiotics (not only for prophylaxis) has brought lights and shadows in cirrhosis. Indeed, there has been the spread of multidrug resistant (MDR) bacteria, a huge healthcare problem that involves many fields of medicine with significant heterogeneity and prevalence across countries and centers, but exerting a highly negative prognostic impact in the setting of decompensated cirrhosis[10]. Moreover, *Clostridioides difficile* infection has been increasingly seen in cirrhotic patients, with prolonged hospitalization and higher in-hospital mortality when compared with non-cirrhotic patients with similar burden of comorbidities[11-13]. Moreover, the onset of such infection raises an already known intestinal dysbiosis, whose prevalence aligns with the severity of liver dysfunction. This may increase the risk of a refractory infection or impair the effectiveness of several treatments, as fecal microbiota transplantation[14].

Several other issues, such as the optimal length of prophylaxis, the preferable antibiotic class to use, and potential drug-drug interactions, remain still unexplored areas. These factors may explain the relatively low adherence to antibiotic prophylaxis in some fields. In a recent survey from France[15], almost all physicians prescribed antibiotics during AVB or after an episode of SBP (97.7% and 94.8%, respectively), but 1 out of 4 did not adhere to primary prophylaxis of SBP, without significant differences between workplaces (general *vs* university hospitals). In a recently published paper from the United States, investigating potential harmful prescriptions in patients with cirrhosis[16], nearly half (48.0%) of the patients with prior SBP filled an antibiotic prescription for secondary prophylaxis, but only 8.8% consistently filled this prescription.

Apart from these areas, antibiotic prophylaxis may be applied in many other settings during hospitalization of patients with cirrhosis, such as before interventional or surgical procedures. Therefore, this paper offers a detailed overview on the application of antibiotic prophylaxis in cirrhosis, according to current evidence.

**Search METHODS**

PubMed/Medline until December 2020 was searched in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systemic Reviews and Meta-Analyses[17] to identify all relevant medical literature included under the following search text terms: (“cirrhosis” OR “liver cirrhosis”) AND (“antibiotic prophylaxis” OR “prophylaxis”) for each of the following items: SBP, variceal bleeding, gastric varices, radiofrequency ablation (RFA), trans arterial chemoembolization, endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography, LT, acute liver failure, and alcoholic hepatitis. Only studies involving patients over 18 years of age and in the English language were included. In addition, a full manual search was performed of all relevant review articles and the retrieved original studies.

**SBP**

According to current guidelines[9,18], primary prophylaxis should start in patients with Child–Pugh score ≥ 9 and serum bilirubin level ≥ 3 mg/dL, impaired renal function or hyponatremia, and ascitic fluid protein lower than 15 g/dL, in view of previous randomized controlled trials (RCTs)[19-21]. A meta-analysis published in 2012 on three studies confirmed the beneficial role of primary prophylaxis in preventing SBP but not in reducing mortality[22]. Recently, an updated Cochrane meta-analysis did not show any gain in survival, in either primary or secondary prophylaxis[23], but the studies were at high risk of bias. Meta-analysis further clarified that, currently, no antibiotic seemed to be superior to others[23,24].

Moreau *et al*[25] investigated the role of norfloxacin in Child-Pugh class C cirrhotic patients. In this RCT, 291 patients (95% without prior SBP) were included independently of ascitic fluid protein level and then randomized to norfloxacin (400 mg/d administered for 6 mo) *vs* placebo. The primary endpoint (*i.e.* 6-mo survival) was not different between cohorts, neither was the incidence of SBP. When LT was considered as a competing risk of death or survival, patients given norfloxacin and having low ascitic fluid proteins displayed a significantly better outcome (cumulative 6-mo probability of death: 15.5% *vs* 24.8%, *P* = 0.045). Notably, patients on norfloxacin therapy were also at lower risk of developing BI, *gram-negative* BI, and MDR infections during therapy. That said, in clinical practice, primary prophylaxis seems to be reasonable for high-risk patients (*i.e.* those with low ascitic fluid proteins and advanced disease), especially if they are waiting for LT.

The rationale behind secondary prophylaxis is the high recurrence rate in patients who recover from SBP (69% within a year)[26]. In a seminal RCT, Ginés *et al*[27] demonstrated that norfloxacin (400 mg/d) decreased SBP recurrence to 20%[27]. As a consequence, current guidelines recommend secondary prophylaxis with norfloxacin (400 mg/d) until death or LT after the first episode of SBP[9,18]. Although the previously reported meta-analysis did not strongly support this measure, due to heterogeneity across studies and a high risk of bias[23], secondary prophylaxis is routinely adopted worldwide.

Nevertheless, clouds are still on the horizon, as well as grey areas in this field. First, it has been questioned whether fluoroquinolones, widely investigated in such patients due to their potential ability in reducing the translocation of *gram-negative* bacteria from the gut lumen, still remain the drugs of choice. Indeed, there has been a changing epidemiology of BI in cirrhosis from *gram-negative* to *gram-positive* rods (especially in hospitalized patients), with increasing prevalence of *Enterococci*. Therefore, quinolones effectiveness after hospital-acquired SBP or after MDR-related SBP appears unclear. Moreover, warnings about their metabolic and cardiovascular side effects were added to previously known effects on joints and nervous system. Apart from trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole, which has been proposed as a possible second-line drug, or first-line choice in quinolones-intolerant patients[28], no effective alternatives have been available between systemic antibiotics; head-to-head comparisons between quinolones and other drug classes, even in specific settings, are urgently needed. The use of other molecules such as rifaximin, which is poorly absorbed in the gastrointestinal tract with high intraluminal levels and already used for prophylaxis of hepatic encephalopathy, is a promising alternative[29] and warrants further investigation through dedicated trials. Moreover, there is some concern about the possible increase in MDR organisms after long-term antibiotic use, but this has not been confirmed in recent studies[25,30]. Lastly, adherence to life-long therapy represents a major issue, as mentioned above. A recent multicenter RCT demonstrated non-inferiority of prophylaxis with ciprofloxacin 750 mg once a week when compared with norfloxacin 400 mg/d in terms of SBP occurrence in a relatively small group of patients with low ascitic fluid protein and previous history of SBP[31]. If these results can be confirmed, without determining increased incidence of MDR rods, this new antibiotic schedule may be of help in clinical practice. In summary, patients with cirrhosis at highest risk of SBP development may require primary antibiotic prophylaxis, especially when awaiting LT. Secondary prophylaxis is recommended in view of stronger supporting evidence. Until now, quinolones remain the drugs of choice.

**Variceal Bleeding**

The beneficial role of antibiotic prophylaxis has been widely demonstrated in patients with decompensated cirrhosis and AVB. The rationale behind antibiotic prophylaxis is that a relevant percentage of bleeding episodes can be due to infection-related worsening of portal hypertension and coagulopathy. Moreover, infection is a causative factor in early variceal rebleeding[32]. A meta-analysis of 12 RCTs, including 1241 patients, confirmed the beneficial role of antibiotic prophylaxis in terms of overall mortality, mortality from BIs, and overall incidence of BIs[33].

Two major issues have to be addressed in the AVB setting. First, whether one class of antibiotics could be considered more effective than the others. A RCT conducted by Fernández *et al*[34] showed that patients who received norfloxacin had a higher rate of BI than those receiving cephalosporin, quinolone resistance being a major cause of infection breakthrough in these patients. The abovementioned meta-analysis[33] did not show any superiority of a specific class of antibiotics over the others, since these were all superior to the placebo; nevertheless, the beneficial effect seemed to be more pronounced in trials using cephalosporins (relative risk: 0.16, 95% confidence interval: 0.05-0.48), followed by quinolones (relative risk: 0.27, 95% confidence interval: 0.18-0.39). Therefore, current Guidelines recommend the use of intravenous (i.v.) cephalosporins (*i.e.* ceftriaxone 1 gr/d) as the best prophylactic therapy in AVB[35,36]. In clinical practice, the choice also has to take into account local epidemiology, setting of bleeding (*i.e.* out- *vs* in-hospital bleeding), and patient’s individual features [previous antibiotic therapy; previous known infections or colonization(s)].

Second, the need for universal prophylaxis. Data from a propensity-matched cohort of 381 patients with AVB[37] showed that Child-Pugh A patients had a negligible risk of infection (2% *vs* 1%) and mortality (2.5% *vs* 0.4%), regardless of prophylaxis. The risk of infection rose in Child-Pugh class B patients, being significantly different in those receiving prophylaxis (6% *vs* 14%), even if mortality did not change (5% *vs* 7%). Finally, antibiotics significantly reduced both BI (19% *vs* 39%) and mortality (35% *vs* 62%) in Child-Pugh C patients. Therefore, current guidelines advocate prospective studies to assess properly the effectiveness of antibiotic prophylaxis in compensated patients[35].

In the setting of elective variceal band ligation, antibiotic use is less common. The rationale behind prophylaxis is the risk of bacteremia, which occurs in 3%-6% of cases, but it becomes clinically relevant only in a minority. A recently published systematic review and meta-analysis investigated this topic including 1001 procedures in 587 patients from 19 studies[38]. Overall, the frequency of bacteremia was 17% and 6% after sclerosis and band ligation, respectively. Comparing elective *vs* emergency procedures, the authors showed a significant difference for sclerosis (13% *vs* 22.5%) but not for band ligation (7.6% *vs* 3.2%). In summary, data do not currently provide strong recommendations about routine antibiotic prophylaxis for elective variceal therapy[35,39]. Few data are available on the effectiveness of antibiotic prophylaxis for elective fundal variceal obturation with cyanoacrylate. A study from China[40] showed that sepsis occurred with a relatively low frequency (0.64%), whereas the risk was four-fold higher in the emergency setting. A further prospective RCT from China, including 107 patients undergoing elective cyanoacrylate obturation, showed that 53 who received cefotiam 2 gr i.v. before endoscopy experienced a lower incidence of post-operative complications, even if differences on infectious complications were not exhaustively reported[41]. Finally, a small study from Thailand compared cyanoacrylate injection in urgent *vs* elective setting, showing a negligible rate of peri/post-procedural infectious episodes in the former group (0% *vs* 20%)[42].

In summary, antibiotic prophylaxis remains a cornerstone for decompensated cirrhosis with AVB. According to available data, its use may be not routinely used in the non-urgent setting.

**Interventional Procedures**

Trans jugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt (TIPS) has been increasingly adopted in patients with cirrhosis, especially for the treatment of refractory ascites and variceal bleeding. Sepsis or bacteremia are quite common complications of TIPS placement, occurring in 2%-10% of cases[43,44]. Stent infection (*i.e.* endotipsitis) is a rare condition, caused by either *gram-positive* or *gram-negative* bacteria and can occur early (*i.e.* within 3 mo) after stent placement, or in a later period[45,46]. A single-center randomized study on 105 patients showed a non-significant reduction of post-interventional infections (20% *vs* 14%) after prophylactic administration of cephalosporin (cefotiam, 2 g i.v.). At multivariate analysis, multiple stenting, maintenance of central venous line, but not severity of underlying liver disease, had a significant impact on post-TIPS infection[47]. The same group further demonstrated that different antibiotic dosages for prophylaxis (single dose of ceftriaxone, 1 gr *vs* 2 gr i.v.) were not associated with different outcomes in terms of post-procedural infections in 82 patients undergoing elective TIPS (2.6% BI occurrence within 1 wk, in both groups)[48]. That said, current guidelines do not suggest the routine use of antibiotic prophylaxis for TIPS placement[49,50], mainly because strong evidence for this is still lacking[51]. Nevertheless, this must be weighed against the risk of serious post-procedural septic events. Therefore, antibiotic prophylaxis may be considered at least for expected technically difficult procedures or in patients with previous biliary interventions.

Considering endotipsitis, there is no evidence for adopting long-term prophylaxis given the rarity of the condition and the absence of robust microbiological data. Lastly, it has been proposed that antibiotic prophylaxis may be considered in patients having a diagnosis of a thrombosed TIPS, before invasive procedures (*e.g.*, gastrointestinal endoscopy), but larger studies are needed to properly assess this[46].

Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) is a commonly used procedure for many benign and malignant diseases of the biliary tract. A systematic review of nine RCTs showed that antibiotic prophylaxis reduced bacteremia in patients undergoing elective ERCP, but in the subgroup of patients with uncomplicated ERCP, the effect of antibiotics was less pronounced[52]. Therefore, American guidelines recommend antibiotic prophylaxis for prevention of cholangitis in cases of biliary duct obstruction and incomplete drainage[53]. Endoscopic procedures in patients with primary sclerosing cholangitis fall in this special group, due to multiple strictures and frequent prevalence of bacteriobilia, therefore antibiotic prophylaxis is recommended[54,55].

RFA and trans-arterial chemoembolization (TACE) are interventional procedures for the treatment of hepatocellular carcinoma. RFA has been classified as a clean procedure in such patients, not requiring routine antibiotic administration[56]. The incidence of post-procedural abscess is equal to 0.8%, according to available case series[57,58].

Thermal ablation determines heat-induced coagulative necrosis of the tumor. Therefore, bacterial superinfection may be a quite common complication, due to bacterial colonization of the necrotic area; moreover, thermal injury can connect biliary ducts with the ablation zone, creating a route for contamination from enteric bacteria in patients with underlying altered biliary anatomy (*e.g.*, choledocho-jejunostomy, prior endoscopic sphincterotomy). Current evidence therefore suggests that antibiotic prophylaxis may be used in such patients[59-63].

The rationale of TACE is to reduce arterial feeding to a malignant nodule, adding local chemotherapy, such as doxorubicin. A recent retrospective, single-center study from the United States analyzing the outcome of 171 patients who underwent 253 TACE without antibiotic prophylaxis[64] reported no infectious complications. A meta-analysis on four studies reported no significant difference between patients undergoing antibiotic prophylaxis and patients without[65], but interventional techniques were not homogeneous across studies and some endpoints (*e.g.*, post-procedural fever) may unmask inflammatory response rather than true infectious complications. Local instillation of antibiotic particles during interventional procedures has recently been proposed[66] but requires further investigations.

Yttrium90 embolization is a relatively novel interventional technique for the treatment of hepatocellular carcinoma or liver metastases. Few data are currently available about antibiotic prophylaxis in this setting, also in view of heterogeneous patients’ characteristics, such as presence or absence of cirrhosis. A recently published survey from 45 European centers confirmed different strategies regarding antibiotic prophylaxis, which was routinely adopted in 8% of cases[67]. However, as for chemoembolization, patients with a history of biliary endoscopic or surgical interventions seemed to be those who may receive antibiotic prophylaxis[68].

In summary, antibiotic prophylaxis is not routinely recommended for elective interventional procedures in patients with cirrhosis. It should be carefully considered in high-risk patients, such as those with bilio-enteric anastomosis, whereas it should be routinely adopted in patients with primary sclerosing cholangitis undergoing ERCP.

**LT**

Infection remains a major cause of morbidity and mortality in liver transplant recipients, with a significant burden on short-term post-operative graft and patient survival. Length of surgery, prior transplant or abdominal surgery, severity of liver disease at time of transplantation, and post-operative complications represent the most important risk factors for post-LT surgical site infection (SSI). The pathogens most commonly associated with early SSIs are *Escherichia coli, Klebsiella, Enterobacter, Acinetobacter*, but also *Enterococci*[69,70].

Theoretically, the main role of pre-operative prophylaxis would be to prevent SSI. Although a Cochrane meta-analysis, after including only one RCT (at high risk of bias), concluded that benefits and harms of prophylactic regimens were difficult to assess[71]; antibiotic prophylaxis has been widely used before LT, being justified by high infection rates (even during ongoing prophylaxis) and complexity of surgery.

Data on the type and length of peri-operative LT prophylaxis are scant. In a survey from 61 European LT centers, Vandecasteele *et al*[72] reported that the type of antibiotic prophylaxis was heterogeneously chosen among centers. An extended spectrum antibiotic regimen was reported in the majority of cases (73%) for elective LT. Notably, 25% centers reported a change in prophylactic schedule (in terms of drug class and length) for the sickest candidates (*i.e.* those with acute-on-chronic liver failure). The survey further demonstrated that one-third of centers used to change antibiotic prophylaxis in the presence of LT for candidates with acute liver failure (ALF).

Current American guidelines recommend the use of piperacillin–tazobactam, or cefotaxime plus ampicillin as routine prophylaxis during LT[73], considering cefuroxime, metronidazole, clindamycin, or quinolones as important alternatives in candidates with allergy to B-lactams. Notably, the guidelines highlight correct timing of prophylaxis (60 min before surgical incision for most antibiotics) and the need to repeat the dose in cases of prolonged surgery and suggest against the routine use of vancomycin, since it may increase the risk of post-transplant MDR rods. Pre-transplant surveillance for ruling-out colonization(s), as well as updates on local bacterial epidemiology, represent further important measures for tailoring prophylaxis to prevent antibiotic failure and reduce MDR development[74,75]. The length of antibiotic prophylaxis remains debated, with heterogeneous courses ranging from 24 h to 5 d. Recently, a RCT from the United States compared short-course (*i.e.* intraoperative doses) and 72-h extended course in 97 adult LT recipients[76]. The authors did not find any difference in prevalence of SSI (19% *vs* 27%) or overall infection (35% *vs* 37%) between groups, providing evidence in favor of a shorter antibiotic schedule. Larger studies are warranted to confirm properly these hypotheses. Recently, antibiotics have been investigated as factors potentially changing post-surgical ischemia-reperfusion injury. In mice, antibiotics prior to LT reduced the gut microbiota, decreasing the inflammatory response and promoting homeostatic responses[77]. These data were confirmed in a retrospective group of LT recipients, confirming that pretreatment with antibiotics was associated with improved hepatocellular function and a decreased incidence of early allograft dysfunction. Further data are needed to confirm properly the effectiveness of antibiotic therapy in LT recipients, beyond its preventive role against SSI.

**Special conditions**

***Severe alcoholic hepatitis***

Patients with severe alcoholic hepatitis (sAH) are prone to develop infection due to their severe state of immunosuppression[78]. BI accounts for nearly 80% of overall invasive infections, although growing attention has been paid to fungal infection, especially Aspergillosis. The prevalence of BI at hospital admission and during hospitalization is up to 30% and 60%, respectively[79,80]. Urinary tract and airways are the most common infectious sites in such a cohort, the latter being highly prevalent after corticosteroid treatment, probably due to an increasing need for mechanical ventilation and intensive care management.

Corticosteroid therapy has been proven effective in improving short-term survival in sAH and currently represents the first-choice medical therapy.

Given the high prevalence of BI at baseline, and the theoretical immunosuppressive role of corticosteroids, several studies investigated whether they would increase infectious risk, and whether infection occurring during corticosteroid therapy would significantly impair survival[81]. A study on a large cohort of patients with sAH confirmed an increasing rate of BI during corticosteroid treatment (23% *vs* 12% at baseline)[82], but the actual role of corticosteroids was difficult to ascertain. Considering prognosis, a landmark study from France[79] demonstrated that the probability of being infected after/during corticosteroids reduced the survival benefit given by medical therapy. A further meta-analysis on 12 studies involving 1062 patients did not show a higher short-term risk of death for infection in those receiving corticosteroids, when compared with those receiving a placebo[83].

That said, antibiotic prophylaxis has been proposed in such a setting. Vergis *et al*[82] demonstrated that an infection occurring prior to corticosteroid introduction has a more favorable course if the antibiotic is continued also during steroid therapy. Moreover, the use of prophylactic antibiotics (prescribed in 45% of cases) was associated with a lower risk of death than that in patients who did not receive prophylactic antibiotics (13% *vs* 52%)[82]. Summarizing the available data, infection is highly prevalent in patients with sAH, both in those receiving steroids and not. The impact of steroids as a potential risk factor for infection is currently debated and not supported by robust data. An ongoing clinical trial (NCT02281929) assessing the prophylactic role of amoxicillin-clavulanic acid will probably clarify this point.

**ALF**

In a similar fashion to sAH and acute-on-chronic liver failure, ALF is characterized by a severe state of immunosuppression. Moreover, the rapidly evolving scenario of ALF, including the changing neurological status and need for circulatory support and mechanical ventilation, makes diagnosis of BI even more difficult. The prevalence of BI is nearly 30%-34%, according to recent studies[84,85]. Severity of the underlying condition and presence of cerebral edema seem to be associated with infection development. Occurrence of infection is obviously associated with worse outcome in ALF, since it may further derange hepatic and extra-hepatic organ(s) failure and may delay or contra-indicate LT. Recently, a retrospective analysis of a large United States cohort by Karvellas *et al*[86] did not show any significant improvement with administration of antibiotic prophylaxis in 600 patients with ALF, if compared with the 951 patients who did not receive antibiotics. Indeed, there was no significant difference in the probability of having bloodstream infection based on receiving prophylaxis (12.8%) or not (15.7% *P* = 0.12). Notably, the timing of prophylaxis was not homogeneous, nor were the clinical characteristics between cohorts, such as type of prophylaxis (47% extended spectrum beta-lactam, 39% vancomycin, 27% fluoroquinolones, and 20% third and fourth generation cephalosporins). Other strategies, such as selective bowel decontamination, did not show any significant benefit either[87]. In summary, current guidelines say that, even the routine use of prophylactic antibiotics does not increase survival in such patients, a strict surveillance for infection should be provided in order to start antibiotic therapy as early as possible[88,89]. Prophylaxis should be considered in cases where illness progression is considered likely, as in those with worsening encephalopathy, signs of systemic inflammation, or awaiting LT[90,91]. The choice of antibiotic class is even more debated, probably due to heterogeneous epidemiology across studies and the relevant number of culture-negative infections. That said, the high prevalence of pneumonia[87], as well as the presence of indwelling catheters and invasive procedures should be taken into account.

**CONCLUSION**

BI represents a common complication in patients with cirrhosis due to disease-related immune dysfunction. In this setting, antibiotic prophylaxis plays a major role, especially in high-risk patients. Type and length of prophylaxis are supported by low quality data in several fields of hepatology and LT (Table 1) and are currently heterogeneously adopted across centers. Since unnecessary prophylaxis or prolonged schedules may increase the risk of anaphylaxis and development of MDR rods, a wise adherence to current recommendations and a rigorous application of antibiotic stewardship are of utmost importance. Other important remarks should be offered to the reader. First, this paper does not include prophylaxis against invasive fungal infection, which is another serious complication in cirrhosis, having an increasing prevalence and a dreadful outcome[92]. Second, although we have focused on systemic antibiotic prophylaxis, growing evidence on non-antibiotic prophylaxis against BI in cirrhosis has to be mentioned. The role of rifaximin, a nonabsorbable antibiotic, has been largely demonstrated for patients with prior episodes of hepatic encephalopathy. Other emerging selective gut decontamination modalities, including prebiotics and probiotics, and fecal microbiota transplant are in the pipeline[93]. Future studies are therefore warranted to investigate whether these modifications to gut microbiota will reduce the occurrence of BI (especially SBP), acting as prophylactic strategies. Moreover, the preventive role of non-selective beta blockers and albumin has to be robustly confirmed, according to underlying liver function and setting[94,95].

Finally, we strongly encourage an updated review of local bacterial epidemiology in clinical practice, and a strong liaison with infectious disease specialists, pharmacologists, microbiologists, and epidemiologists, in order to use tailored prophylaxis regimens, because the right prevention works better than a cure.

**REFERENCES**

1 **Bernardi M**, Moreau R, Angeli P, Schnabl B, Arroyo V. Mechanisms of decompensation and organ failure in cirrhosis: From peripheral arterial vasodilation to systemic inflammation hypothesis. *J Hepatol* 2015; **63**: 1272-1284 [PMID: 26192220 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2015.07.004]

2 **Albillos A**, Lario M, Álvarez-Mon M. Cirrhosis-associated immune dysfunction: distinctive features and clinical relevance. *J Hepatol* 2014; **61**: 1385-1396 [PMID: 25135860 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2014.08.010]

3 **Fernández J**, Acevedo J, Wiest R, Gustot T, Amoros A, Deulofeu C, Reverter E, Martínez J, Saliba F, Jalan R, Welzel T, Pavesi M, Hernández-Tejero M, Ginès P, Arroyo V; European Foundation for the Study of Chronic Liver Failure. Bacterial and fungal infections in acute-on-chronic liver failure: prevalence, characteristics and impact on prognosis. *Gut* 2018; **67**: 1870-1880 [PMID: 28847867 DOI: 10.1136/gutjnl-2017-314240]

4 **Arvaniti V**, D'Amico G, Fede G, Manousou P, Tsochatzis E, Pleguezuelo M, Burroughs AK. Infections in patients with cirrhosis increase mortality four-fold and should be used in determining prognosis. *Gastroenterology* 2010; **139**: 1246-1256, 1256.e1-1256.e5 [PMID: 20558165 DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2010.06.019]

5 **Ferrarese A**, Vitale A, Sgarabotto D, Russo FP, Germani G, Gambato M, Cattelan AM, Angeli P, Cillo U, Burra P, Senzolo M. Outcome of a First Episode of Bacterial Infection in Candidates for Liver Transplantation. *Liver Transpl* 2019; **25**: 1187-1197 [PMID: 31021050 DOI: 10.1002/lt.25479]

6 **Reddy KR**, O'Leary JG, Kamath PS, Fallon MB, Biggins SW, Wong F, Patton HM, Garcia-Tsao G, Subramanian RM, Thacker LR, Bajaj JS; North American Consortium for the Study of End-Stage Liver Disease. High risk of delisting or death in liver transplant candidates following infections: Results from the North American Consortium for the Study of End-Stage Liver Disease. *Liver Transpl* 2015; **21**: 881-888 [PMID: 25845966 DOI: 10.1002/lt.24139]

7 **Karvellas CJ**, Abraldes JG, Arabi YM, Kumar A; Cooperative Antimicrobial Therapy of Septic Shock (CATSS) Database Research Group. Appropriate and timely antimicrobial therapy in cirrhotic patients with spontaneous bacterial peritonitis-associated septic shock: a retrospective cohort study. *Aliment Pharmacol Ther* 2015; **41**: 747-757 [PMID: 25703246 DOI: 10.1111/apt.13135]

8 **Fernández J**, Tandon P, Mensa J, Garcia-Tsao G. Antibiotic prophylaxis in cirrhosis: Good and bad. *Hepatology* 2016; **63**: 2019-2031 [PMID: 26528864 DOI: 10.1002/hep.28330]

9 European Association for the Study of the Liver. Electronic address: easloffice@easloffice.eu.; European Association for the Study of the Liver. EASL Clinical Practice Guidelines for the management of patients with decompensated cirrhosis. *J Hepatol* 2018; **69**: 406-460 [DOI: 10.1007/s00125-016-3902-y]

10 **Fernández J**, Piano S, Bartoletti M, Wey EQ. Management of bacterial and fungal infections in cirrhosis: The MDRO challenge. *J Hepatol* 2021; **75 Suppl 1**: S101-S117 [PMID: 34039482 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2020.11.010]

11 **Bajaj JS**, Ananthakrishnan AN, Hafeezullah M, Zadvornova Y, Dye A, McGinley EL, Saeian K, Heuman D, Sanyal AJ, Hoffmann RG. Clostridium difficile is associated with poor outcomes in patients with cirrhosis: A national and tertiary center perspective. *Am J Gastroenterol* 2010; **105**: 106-113 [PMID: 19844204 DOI: 10.1038/ajg.2009.615]

12 **Kim D**, Yoo ER, Li AA, Tighe SP, Cholankeril G, Ahmed A. Trends in Hospitalizations for Clostridioides difficile Infection in End-Stage Liver Disease, 2005-2014. *Dig Dis Sci* 2021; **66**: 296-307 [PMID: 32124196 DOI: 10.1007/s10620-020-06162-0]

13 **Dotson KM**, Aitken SL, Sofjan AK, Shah DN, Aparasu RR, Garey KW. Outcomes associated with Clostridium difficile infection in patients with chronic liver disease. *Epidemiol Infect* 2018; **146**: 1101-1105 [PMID: 29739486 DOI: 10.1017/S0950268818001036]

14 **Pringle PL**, Soto MT, Chung RT, Hohmann E. Patients With Cirrhosis Require More Fecal Microbiota Capsules to Cure Refractory and Recurrent Clostridium difficile Infections. *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2019; **17**: 791-793 [PMID: 29859984 DOI: 10.1016/j.cgh.2018.05.038]

15 **Thevenot T**, Degand T, Grelat N, Elkrief L, Christol C, Moreau R, Henrion J, Cadranel JF, Sheppard F, Bureau C, di Martino V, Pauwels A; National Association of General Hospital Hepatogastroenterologists. A French national survey on the use of antibiotic prophylaxis in cirrhotic patients. *Liver Int* 2013; **33**: 389-397 [PMID: 23302021 DOI: 10.1111/liv.12093]

16 **Thomson MJ**, Lok ASF, Tapper EB. Appropriate and Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Decompensated Cirrhosis. *Hepatology* 2021; **73**: 2429-2440 [PMID: 32911564 DOI: 10.1002/hep.31548]

17 **Liberati A**, Altman DG, Tetzlaff J, Mulrow C, Gøtzsche PC, Ioannidis JP, Clarke M, Devereaux PJ, Kleijnen J, Moher D. The PRISMA statement for reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of studies that evaluate health care interventions: explanation and elaboration. *J Clin Epidemiol* 2009; **62**: e1-34 [PMID: 19631507 DOI: 10.1016/j.jclinepi.2009.06.006]

18 **Runyon BA**; AASLD Practice Guidelines Committee. Management of adult patients with ascites due to cirrhosis: an update. *Hepatology* 2009; **49**: 2087-2107 [PMID: 19475696 DOI: 10.1002/hep.22853]

19 **Singh N**, Gayowski T, Yu VL, Wagener MM. Trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole for the prevention of spontaneous bacterial peritonitis in cirrhosis: a randomized trial. *Ann Intern Med* 1995; **122**: 595-598 [PMID: 7887554 DOI: 10.7326/0003-4819-122-8-199504150-00007]

20 **Fernández J**, Navasa M, Planas R, Montoliu S, Monfort D, Soriano G, Vila C, Pardo A, Quintero E, Vargas V, Such J, Ginès P, Arroyo V. Primary prophylaxis of spontaneous bacterial peritonitis delays hepatorenal syndrome and improves survival in cirrhosis. *Gastroenterology* 2007; **133**: 818-824 [PMID: 17854593 DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2007.06.065]

21 **Terg R**, Fassio E, Guevara M, Cartier M, Longo C, Lucero R, Landeira C, Romero G, Dominguez N, Muñoz A, Levi D, Miguez C, Abecasis R. Ciprofloxacin in primary prophylaxis of spontaneous bacterial peritonitis: a randomized, placebo-controlled study. *J Hepatol* 2008; **48**: 774-779 [PMID: 18316137 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2008.01.024]

22 **Wiest R**, Krag A, Gerbes A. Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis: recent guidelines and beyond. *Gut* 2012; **61**: 297-310 [PMID: 22147550 DOI: 10.1136/gutjnl-2011-300779]

23 **Komolafe O**, Roberts D, Freeman SC, Wilson P, Sutton AJ, Cooper NJ, Pavlov CS, Milne EJ, Hawkins N, Cowlin M, Thorburn D, Davidson BR, Tsochatzis E, Gurusamy KS. Antibiotic prophylaxis to prevent spontaneous bacterial peritonitis in people with liver cirrhosis: a network meta-analysis. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2020; **1**: CD013125 [PMID: 31978256 DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD013125.pub2]

24 **Mücke MM**, Mücke VT, Graf C, Schwarzkopf KM, Ferstl PG, Fernandez J, Zeuzem S, Trebicka J, Lange CM, Herrmann E. Efficacy of Norfloxacin Prophylaxis to Prevent Spontaneous Bacterial Peritonitis: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Clin Transl Gastroenterol* 2020; **11**: e00223 [PMID: 32955202 DOI: 10.14309/ctg.0000000000000223]

25 **Moreau R**, Elkrief L, Bureau C, Perarnau JM, Thévenot T, Saliba F, Louvet A, Nahon P, Lannes A, Anty R, Hillaire S, Pasquet B, Ozenne V, Rudler M, Ollivier-Hourmand I, Robic MA, d'Alteroche L, Di Martino V, Ripault MP, Pauwels A, Grangé JD, Carbonell N, Bronowicki JP, Payancé A, Rautou PE, Valla D, Gault N, Lebrec D; NORFLOCIR Trial Investigators. Effects of Long-term Norfloxacin Therapy in Patients With Advanced Cirrhosis. *Gastroenterology* 2018; **155**: 1816-1827.e9 [PMID: 30144431 DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2018.08.026]

26 **Titó L**, Rimola A, Ginès P, Llach J, Arroyo V, Rodés J. Recurrence of spontaneous bacterial peritonitis in cirrhosis: frequency and predictive factors. *Hepatology* 1988; **8**: 27-31 [PMID: 3257456 DOI: 10.1002/hep.1840080107]

27 **Ginés P**, Rimola A, Planas R, Vargas V, Marco F, Almela M, Forné M, Miranda ML, Llach J, Salmerón JM. Norfloxacin prevents spontaneous bacterial peritonitis recurrence in cirrhosis: results of a double-blind, placebo-controlled trial. *Hepatology* 1990; **12**: 716-724 [PMID: 2210673 DOI: 10.1002/hep.1840120416]

28 **Lontos S**, Shelton E, Angus PW, Vaughan R, Roberts SK, Gordon A, Gow PJ. A randomized controlled study of trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole versus norfloxacin for the prevention of infection in cirrhotic patients. *J Dig Dis* 2014; **15**: 260-267 [PMID: 24612987 DOI: 10.1111/1751-2980.12132]

29 **Salehi S**, Tranah TH, Lim S, Heaton N, Heneghan M, Aluvihare V, Patel VC, Shawcross DL. Rifaximin reduces the incidence of spontaneous bacterial peritonitis, variceal bleeding and all-cause admissions in patients on the liver transplant waiting list. *Aliment Pharmacol Ther* 2019; **50**: 435-441 [PMID: 31169941 DOI: 10.1111/apt.15326]

30 **Piano S**, Singh V, Caraceni P, Maiwall R, Alessandria C, Fernandez J, Soares EC, Kim DJ, Kim SE, Marino M, Vorobioff J, Barea RCR, Merli M, Elkrief L, Vargas V, Krag A, Singh SP, Lesmana LA, Toledo C, Marciano S, Verhelst X, Wong F, Intagliata N, Rabinowich L, Colombato L, Kim SG, Gerbes A, Durand F, Roblero JP, Bhamidimarri KR, Boyer TD, Maevskaya M, Fassio E, Kim HS, Hwang JS, Gines P, Gadano A, Sarin SK, Angeli P; International Club of Ascites Global Study Group. Epidemiology and Effects of Bacterial Infections in Patients With Cirrhosis Worldwide. *Gastroenterology* 2019; **156**: 1368-1380.e10 [PMID: 30552895 DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2018.12.005]

31 **Yim HJ**, Suh SJ, Jung YK, Yim SY, Seo YS, Lee YR, Park SY, Jang JY, Kim YS, Kim HS, Kim BI, Um SH. Daily Norfloxacin vs. Weekly Ciprofloxacin to Prevent Spontaneous Bacterial Peritonitis: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Am J Gastroenterol* 2018; **113**: 1167-1176 [PMID: 29946179 DOI: 10.1038/s41395-018-0168-7]

32 **Thalheimer U**, Triantos CK, Samonakis DN, Patch D, Burroughs AK. Infection, coagulation, and variceal bleeding in cirrhosis. *Gut* 2005; **54**: 556-563 [PMID: 15753544 DOI: 10.1136/gut.2004.048181]

33 **Chavez-Tapia NC,** Barrientos-Gutierrez T, Tellez-Avila FI, Soares-Weiser K, Uribe M. Antibiotic prophylaxis for cirrhotic patients with upper gastrointestinal bleeding. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2010; CD002907 [DOI: 10.1002/14651858.cd002907.pub2]

34 **Fernández J**, Ruiz del Arbol L, Gómez C, Durandez R, Serradilla R, Guarner C, Planas R, Arroyo V, Navasa M. Norfloxacin vs ceftriaxone in the prophylaxis of infections in patients with advanced cirrhosis and hemorrhage. *Gastroenterology* 2006; **131**: 1049-56; quiz 1285 [PMID: 17030175 DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2006.07.010]

35 **de Franchis R**; Baveno VI Faculty. Expanding consensus in portal hypertension: Report of the Baveno VI Consensus Workshop: Stratifying risk and individualizing care for portal hypertension. *J Hepatol* 2015; **63**: 743-752 [PMID: 26047908 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2015.05.022]

36 **Garcia-Tsao G**, Abraldes JG, Berzigotti A, Bosch J. Portal hypertensive bleeding in cirrhosis: Risk stratification, diagnosis, and management: 2016 practice guidance by the American Association for the study of liver diseases. *Hepatology* 2017; **65**: 310-335 [PMID: 27786365 DOI: 10.1002/hep.28906]

37 **Tandon P**, Abraldes JG, Keough A, Bastiampillai R, Jayakumar S, Carbonneau M, Wong E, Kao D, Bain VG, Ma M. Risk of Bacterial Infection in Patients With Cirrhosis and Acute Variceal Hemorrhage, Based on Child-Pugh Class, and Effects of Antibiotics. *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2015; **13**: 1189-96.e2 [PMID: 25460564 DOI: 10.1016/j.cgh.2014.11.019]

38 **Jia Y**, Dwivedi A, Elhanafi S, Ortiz A, Othman M, Zuckerman M. Low risk of bacteremia after endoscopic variceal therapy for esophageal varices: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Endosc Int Open* 2015; **3**: E409-E417 [PMID: 26528494 DOI: 10.1055/s-0034-1392552]

39 **ASGE Standards of Practice Committee.**, Khashab MA, Chithadi KV, Acosta RD, Bruining DH, Chandrasekhara V, Eloubeidi MA, Fanelli RD, Faulx AL, Fonkalsrud L, Lightdale JR, Muthusamy VR, Pasha SF, Saltzman JR, Shaukat A, Wang A, Cash BD. Antibiotic prophylaxis for GI endoscopy. *Gastrointest Endosc* 2015; **81**: 81-89 [PMID: 25442089 DOI: 10.1016/j.gie.2014.08.008]

40 **Cheng LF**, Wang ZQ, Li CZ, Lin W, Yeo AE, Jin B. Low incidence of complications from endoscopic gastric variceal obturation with butyl cyanoacrylate. *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2010; **8**: 760-766 [PMID: 20621678 DOI: 10.1016/j.cgh.2010.05.019]

41 **Liu C**, Ma L, Wang J, Li F, Tseng Y, Luo T, Zeng X, Chen S. Prophylactic use of antibiotics in endoscopic injection of tissue adhesive for the elective treatment of gastric varices: A randomized controlled study. *J Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2019; **34**: 1486-1491 [PMID: 31245885 DOI: 10.1111/jgh.14769]

42 **Rerknimitr R**, Chanyaswad J, Kongkam P, Kullavanijaya P. Risk of bacteremia in bleeding and nonbleeding gastric varices after endoscopic injection of cyanoacrylate. *Endoscopy* 2008; **40**: 644-649 [PMID: 18561097 DOI: 10.1055/s-2008-1077294]

43 **Boyer TD**, Haskal ZJ; American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases. The role of transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt in the management of portal hypertension. *Hepatology* 2005; **41**: 386-400 [PMID: 15660434 DOI: 10.1002/hep.20559]

44 **Bettinger D**, Schultheiss M, Boettler T, Muljono M, Thimme R, Rössle M. Procedural and shunt-related complications and mortality of the transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt (TIPSS). *Aliment Pharmacol Ther* 2016; **44**: 1051-1061 [PMID: 27670147 DOI: 10.1111/apt.13809]

45 **Mizrahi M**, Adar T, Shouval D, Bloom AI, Shibolet O. Endotipsitis-persistent infection of transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt: pathogenesis, clinical features and management. *Liver Int* 2010; **30**: 175-183 [PMID: 19929905 DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-3231.2009.02158.x]

46 **Sanyal AJ**, Reddy KR. Vegetative infection of transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunts. *Gastroenterology* 1998; **115**: 110-115 [PMID: 9649465 DOI: 10.1016/s0016-5085(98)70371-3]

47 **Deibert P**, Schwarz S, Olschewski M, Siegerstetter V, Blum HE, Rössle M. Risk factors and prevention of early infection after implantation or revision of transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunts: results of a randomized study. *Dig Dis Sci* 1998; **43**: 1708-1713 [PMID: 9724157 DOI: 10.1023/a:1018819316633]

48 **Gulberg V**, Deibert P, Ochs A, Rossle M, Gerbes AL. Prevention of infectious complications after transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt in cirrhotic patients with a single dose of ceftriaxone. *Hepatogastroenterology* 1999; **46**: 1126-1130 [PMID: 10370679]

49 **Fagiuoli S**, Bruno R, Debernardi Venon W, Schepis F, Vizzutti F, Toniutto P, Senzolo M, Caraceni P, Salerno F, Angeli P, Cioni R, Vitale A, Grosso M, De Gasperi A, D'Amico G, Marzano A; AISF TIPS Special Conference. Consensus conference on TIPS management: Techniques, indications, contraindications. *Dig Liver Dis* 2017; **49**: 121-137 [PMID: 27884494 DOI: 10.1016/j.dld.2016.10.011]

50 **Tripathi D**, Stanley AJ, Hayes PC, Travis S, Armstrong MJ, Tsochatzis EA, Rowe IA, Roslund N, Ireland H, Lomax M, Leithead JA, Mehrzad H, Aspinall RJ, McDonagh J, Patch D. Transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic stent-shunt in the management of portal hypertension. *Gut* 2020; **69**: 1173-1192 [PMID: 32114503 DOI: 10.1136/gutjnl-2019-320221]

51 **Ryan JM**, Ryan BM, Smith TP. Antibiotic prophylaxis in interventional radiology. *J Vasc Interv Radiol* 2004; **15**: 547-556 [PMID: 15178714 DOI: 10.1097/01.rvi.000024942.58200.5e]

52 **Brand M,** Bizos D, O'Farrell P Jr. Antibiotic prophylaxis for patients undergoing elective endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2010; CD007345 [DOI: 10.1002/14651858.cd007345]

53 **Tang X**, Gong W, Jiang B. Antibiotic prophylaxis for GI endoscopy. *Gastrointest Endosc* 2015; **81**: 1503-1504 [PMID: 25986123 DOI: 10.1016/j.gie.2015.01.021]

54 **Aabakken L**, Karlsen TH, Albert J, Arvanitakis M, Chazouilleres O, Dumonceau JM, Färkkilä M, Fickert P, Hirschfield GM, Laghi A, Marzioni M, Fernandez M, Pereira SP, Pohl J, Poley JW, Ponsioen CY, Schramm C, Swahn F, Tringali A, Hassan C. Role of endoscopy in primary sclerosing cholangitis: European Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ESGE) and European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) Clinical Guideline. *Endoscopy* 2017; **49**: 588-608 [PMID: 28420030 DOI: 10.1055/s-0043-107029]

55 **Chapman MH**, Thorburn D, Hirschfield GM, Webster GGJ, Rushbrook SM, Alexander G, Collier J, Dyson JK, Jones DE, Patanwala I, Thain C, Walmsley M, Pereira SP. British Society of Gastroenterology and UK-PSC guidelines for the diagnosis and management of primary sclerosing cholangitis. *Gut* 2019; **68**: 1356-1378 [PMID: 31154395 DOI: 10.1136/gutjnl-2018-317993]

56 **Chehab MA**, Thakor AS, Tulin-Silver S, Connolly BL, Cahill AM, Ward TJ, Padia SA, Kohi MP, Midia M, Chaudry G, Gemmete JJ, Mitchell JW, Brody L, Crowley JJ, Heran MKS, Weinstein JL, Nikolic B, Dariushnia SR, Tam AL, Venkatesan AM. Adult and Pediatric Antibiotic Prophylaxis during Vascular and IR Procedures: A Society of Interventional Radiology Practice Parameter Update Endorsed by the Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiological Society of Europe and the Canadian Association for Interventional Radiology. *J Vasc Interv Radiol* 2018; **29**: 1483-1501.e2 [PMID: 30274857 DOI: 10.1016/j.jvir.2018.06.007]

57 **Bhatia SS**, Spector S, Echenique A, Froud T, Suthar R, Lawson I, Dalal R, Dinh V, Yrizarry J, Narayanan G. Is Antibiotic Prophylaxis for Percutaneous Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) of Primary Liver Tumors Necessary? Results From a Single-Center Experience. *Cardiovasc Intervent Radiol* 2015; **38**: 922-928 [PMID: 25392237 DOI: 10.1007/s00270-014-1020-0]

58 **Park JG**, Park SY, Tak WY, Kweon YO, Jang SY, Lee YR, Hur K, Lee HJ, Lee HW. Early complications after percutaneous radiofrequency ablation for hepatocellular carcinoma: an analysis of 1,843 ablations in 1,211 patients in a single centre: experience over 10 years. *Clin Radiol* 2017; **72**: 692.e9-692.e15 [PMID: 28364952 DOI: 10.1016/j.crad.2017.03.001]

59 **Kim W**, Clark TW, Baum RA, Soulen MC. Risk factors for liver abscess formation after hepatic chemoembolization. *J Vasc Interv Radiol* 2001; **12**: 965-968 [PMID: 11487677 DOI: 10.1016/s1051-0443(07)61577-2]

60 **Lv WF**, Lu D, He YS, Xiao JK, Zhou CZ, Cheng DL. Liver Abscess Formation Following Transarterial Chemoembolization: Clinical Features, Risk Factors, Bacteria Spectrum, and Percutaneous Catheter Drainage. *Medicine (Baltimore)* 2016; **95**: e3503 [PMID: 27124055 DOI: 10.1097/MD.0000000000003503]

61 **Shibata T**, Yamamoto Y, Yamamoto N, Maetani Y, Shibata T, Ikai I, Terajima H, Hatano E, Kubo T, Itoh K, Hiraoka M. Cholangitis and liver abscess after percutaneous ablation therapy for liver tumors: incidence and risk factors. *J Vasc Interv Radiol* 2003; **14**: 1535-1542 [PMID: 14654488 DOI: 10.1097/01.rvi.0000099532.29957.4f]

62 **de Baère T**, Risse O, Kuoch V, Dromain C, Sengel C, Smayra T, Gamal El Din M, Letoublon C, Elias D. Adverse events during radiofrequency treatment of 582 hepatic tumors. *AJR Am J Roentgenol* 2003; **181**: 695-700 [PMID: 12933462 DOI: 10.2214/ajr.181.3.1810695]

63 **Choi D**, Lim HK, Kim MJ, Kim SJ, Kim SH, Lee WJ, Lim JH, Paik SW, Yoo BC, Choi MS, Kim S. Liver abscess after percutaneous radiofrequency ablation for hepatocellular carcinomas: frequency and risk factors. *AJR Am J Roentgenol* 2005; **184**: 1860-1867 [PMID: 15908543 DOI: 10.2214/ajr.184.6.01841860]

64 **Watchmaker JM**, Lipnik AJ, Fritsche MR, Baker JC, Mouli SK, Geevarghese S, Banovac F, Omary RA, Brown DB. Are prophylactic antibiotics necessary prior to transarterial chemoembolization for hepatocellular carcinoma in patients with native biliary anatomy? *J Surg Oncol* 2018; **117**: 1312-1317 [PMID: 29513895 DOI: 10.1002/jso.24993]

65 **Wang J**, He XD, Zhang YC. Antibiotic prophylaxis in transarterial therapy of hepatocellular carcinoma: a meta-analysis. *Can J Gastroenterol* 2012; **26**: 85-91 [PMID: 22312607 DOI: 10.1155/2012/375956]

66 **Wang Q**, Hodavance M, Ronald J, Suhocki PV, Kim CY. Minimal Risk of Biliary Tract Complications, Including Hepatic Abscess, After Transarterial Embolization for Hepatocellular Carcinoma Using Concentrated Antibiotics Mixed with Particles. *Cardiovasc Intervent Radiol* 2018; **41**: 1391-1398 [PMID: 29797068 DOI: 10.1007/s00270-018-1989-x]

67 **Powerski MJ**, Scheurig-Münkler C, Banzer J, Schnapauff D, Hamm B, Gebauer B. Clinical practice in radioembolization of hepatic malignancies: a survey among interventional centers in Europe. *Eur J Radiol* 2012; **81**: e804-e811 [PMID: 22546235 DOI: 10.1016/j.ejrad.2012.04.004]

68 **Devulapalli KK**, Fidelman N, Soulen MC, Miller M, Johnson MS, Addo E, El-Haddad G, Nutting C, Morrison J, Farsad K, Lokken RP, Gaba RC, Fleming J, Brown DB, Kwan SW, Rose SC, Pennycooke KA, Liu DM, White SB, Gandhi R, Lazar AA, Kerlan RK Jr. 90Y Radioembolization for Hepatic Malignancy in Patients with Previous Biliary Intervention: Multicenter Analysis of Hepatobiliary Infections. *Radiology* 2018; **288**: 774-781 [PMID: 29737954 DOI: 10.1148/radiol.2018170962]

69 **Anesi JA**, Blumberg EA, Abbo LM. Perioperative Antibiotic Prophylaxis to Prevent Surgical Site Infections in Solid Organ Transplantation. *Transplantation* 2018; **102**: 21-34 [PMID: 28614192 DOI: 10.1097/TP.0000000000001848]

70 **Viehman JA**, Clancy CJ, Clarke L, Shields RK, Silveira FP, Kwak EJ, Vergidis P, Hughes C, Humar A, Nguyen MH. Surgical Site Infections After Liver Transplantation: Emergence of Multidrug-Resistant Bacteria and Implications for Prophylaxis and Treatment Strategies. *Transplantation* 2016; **100**: 2107-2114 [PMID: 27479167 DOI: 10.1097/TP.0000000000001356]

71 **Almeida RA,** Hasimoto CN, Kim A, Hasimoto EN, El Dib R. Antibiotic prophylaxis for surgical site infection in people undergoing liver transplantation. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2015; CD010164 [DOI: 10.1002/14651858.cd010164.pub2]

72 **Vandecasteele E**, De Waele J, Vandijck D, Blot S, Vogelaers D, Rogiers X, Van Vlierberghe H, Decruyenaere J, Hoste E. Antimicrobial prophylaxis in liver transplant patients--a multicenter survey endorsed by the European Liver and Intestine Transplant Association. *Transpl Int* 2010; **23**: 182-190 [PMID: 19793076 DOI: 10.1111/j.1432-2277.2009.00974.x]

73 **Bratzler DW**, Dellinger EP, Olsen KM, Perl TM, Auwaerter PG, Bolon MK, Fish DN, Napolitano LM, Sawyer RG, Slain D, Steinberg JP, Weinstein RA; American Society of Health-System Pharmacists; Infectious Disease Society of America; Surgical Infection Society; Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America. Clinical practice guidelines for antimicrobial prophylaxis in surgery. *Am J Health Syst Pharm* 2013; **70**: 195-283 [PMID: 23327981 DOI: 10.2146/ajhp120568]

74 **Statlender L**, Yahav D, Ben-Zvi H, Margalit I, Ferder A, Goldberg E, Mor E, Bishara J, Cohen J. Perioperative prophylaxis with single-dose cefazolin for liver transplantation: a retrospective study. *Eur J Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2019; **31**: 1135-1140 [PMID: 30896551 DOI: 10.1097/MEG.0000000000001401]

75 **Ferrarese A**, Zanetto A, Becchetti C, Sciarrone SS, Shalaby S, Germani G, Gambato M, Russo FP, Burra P, Senzolo M. Management of bacterial infection in the liver transplant candidate. *World J Hepatol* 2018; **10**: 222-230 [PMID: 29527258 DOI: 10.4254/wjh.v10.i2.222]

76 **Berry PS**, Rosenberger LH, Guidry CA, Agarwal A, Pelletier S, Sawyer RG. Intraoperative Versus Extended Antibiotic Prophylaxis in Liver Transplant Surgery: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial. *Liver Transpl* 2019; **25**: 1043-1053 [PMID: 31063679 DOI: 10.1002/lt.25486]

77 **Nakamura K**, Kageyama S, Ito T, Hirao H, Kadono K, Aziz A, Dery KJ, Everly MJ, Taura K, Uemoto S, Farmer DG, Kaldas FM, Busuttil RW, Kupiec-Weglinski JW. Antibiotic pretreatment alleviates liver transplant damage in mice and humans. *J Clin Invest* 2019; **129**: 3420-3434 [PMID: 31329160 DOI: 10.1172/JCI127550]

78 **Gustot T**, Fernandez J, Szabo G, Albillos A, Louvet A, Jalan R, Moreau R, Moreno C. Sepsis in alcohol-related liver disease. *J Hepatol* 2017; **67**: 1031-1050 [PMID: 28647569 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2017.06.013]

79 **Louvet A**, Wartel F, Castel H, Dharancy S, Hollebecque A, Canva-Delcambre V, Deltenre P, Mathurin P. Infection in patients with severe alcoholic hepatitis treated with steroids: early response to therapy is the key factor. *Gastroenterology* 2009; **137**: 541-548 [PMID: 19445945 DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2009.04.062]

80 **Gustot T**, Maillart E, Bocci M, Surin R, Trépo E, Degré D, Lucidi V, Taccone FS, Delforge ML, Vincent JL, Donckier V, Jacobs F, Moreno C. Invasive aspergillosis in patients with severe alcoholic hepatitis. *J Hepatol* 2014; **60**: 267-274 [PMID: 24055548 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2013.09.011]

81 **Vergis N**, Atkinson SR, Thursz MR. Assessment and Management of Infection in Alcoholic Hepatitis. *Semin Liver Dis* 2020; **40**: 11-19 [PMID: 31370067 DOI: 10.1055/s-0039-1693402]

82 **Vergis N**, Atkinson SR, Knapp S, Maurice J, Allison M, Austin A, Forrest EH, Masson S, McCune A, Patch D, Richardson P, Gleeson D, Ryder SD, Wright M, Thursz MR. In Patients With Severe Alcoholic Hepatitis, Prednisolone Increases Susceptibility to Infection and Infection-Related Mortality, and Is Associated With High Circulating Levels of Bacterial DNA. *Gastroenterology* 2017; **152**: 1068-1077.e4 [PMID: 28043903 DOI: 10.1053/j.gastro.2016.12.019]

83 **Hmoud BS**, Patel K, Bataller R, Singal AK. Corticosteroids and occurrence of and mortality from infections in severe alcoholic hepatitis: a meta-analysis of randomized trials. *Liver Int* 2016; **36**: 721-728 [PMID: 26279269 DOI: 10.1111/liv.12939]

84 **Shalimar**, Kedia S, Sharma H, Vasudevan S, Sonika U, Upadhyaya AD, Acharya SK. Predictors of infection in viral-hepatitis related acute liver failure. *Scand J Gastroenterol* 2017; **52**: 1413-1419 [PMID: 28875762 DOI: 10.1080/00365521.2017.1374449]

85 **Karvellas CJ**, Pink F, McPhail M, Cross T, Auzinger G, Bernal W, Sizer E, Kutsogiannis DJ, Eltringham I, Wendon JA. Predictors of bacteraemia and mortality in patients with acute liver failure. *Intensive Care Med* 2009; **35**: 1390-1396 [PMID: 19343322 DOI: 10.1007/s00134-009-1472-x]

86 **Karvellas CJ**, Cavazos J, Battenhouse H, Durkalski V, Balko J, Sanders C, Lee WM; US Acute Liver Failure Study Group. Effects of antimicrobial prophylaxis and blood stream infections in patients with acute liver failure: a retrospective cohort study. *Clin Gastroenterol Hepatol* 2014; **12**: 1942-9.e1 [PMID: 24674942 DOI: 10.1016/j.cgh.2014.03.011]

87 **Rolando N**, Philpott-Howard J, Williams R. Bacterial and fungal infection in acute liver failure. *Semin Liver Dis* 1996; **16**: 389-402 [PMID: 9027952 DOI: 10.1055/s-2007-1007252]

88 **European Association for the Study of the Liver.** Electronic address: easloffice@easloffice.eu.; Clinical practice guidelines panel, Wendon, J; Panel members, Cordoba J, Dhawan A, Larsen FS, Manns M, Samuel D, Simpson KJ, Yaron I; EASL Governing Board representative, Bernardi M. EASL Clinical Practical Guidelines on the management of acute (fulminant) liver failure. *J Hepatol* 2017; **66**: 1047-1081 [DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2016.12.003]

89 **Lee WM**, Stravitz RT, Larson AM. Introduction to the revised American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases Position Paper on acute liver failure 2011. *Hepatology* 2012; **55**: 965-967 [PMID: 22213561 DOI: 10.1002/hep.25551]

90 **Bernal W**, Wendon J. Acute liver failure. *N Engl J Med* 2013; **369**: 2525-2534 [PMID: 24369077 DOI: 10.1056/NEJMra1208937]

91 **Paugam-Burtz C**, Levesque E, Louvet A, Thabut D, Amathieu R, Bureau C, Camus C, Chanques G, Faure S, Ferrandière M, Francoz C, Galbois A, Gustot T, Ichai C, Ichai P, Jaber S, Lescot T, Moreau R, Roullet S, Saliba F, Thévenot T, Velly L, Weiss E. Management of liver failure in general intensive care unit. *Anaesth Crit Care Pain Med* 2020; **39**: 143-161 [PMID: 31525507 DOI: 10.1016/j.accpm.2019.06.014]

92 **Ferrarese A**, Cattelan A, Cillo U, Gringeri E, Russo FP, Germani G, Gambato M, Burra P, Senzolo M. Invasive fungal infection before and after liver transplantation. *World J Gastroenterol* 2020; **26**: 7485-7496 [PMID: 33384549 DOI: 10.3748/wjg.v26.i47.7485]

93 **Bajaj JS**, Kassam Z, Fagan A, Gavis EA, Liu E, Cox IJ, Kheradman R, Heuman D, Wang J, Gurry T, Williams R, Sikaroodi M, Fuchs M, Alm E, John B, Thacker LR, Riva A, Smith M, Taylor-Robinson SD, Gillevet PM. Fecal microbiota transplant from a rational stool donor improves hepatic encephalopathy: A randomized clinical trial. *Hepatology* 2017; **66**: 1727-1738 [PMID: 28586116 DOI: 10.1002/hep.29306]

94 **Solà E**, Solé C, Simón-Talero M, Martín-Llahí M, Castellote J, Garcia-Martínez R, Moreira R, Torrens M, Márquez F, Fabrellas N, de Prada G, Huelin P, Lopez Benaiges E, Ventura M, Manríquez M, Nazar A, Ariza X, Suñé P, Graupera I, Pose E, Colmenero J, Pavesi M, Guevara M, Navasa M, Xiol X, Córdoba J, Vargas V, Ginès P. Midodrine and albumin for prevention of complications in patients with cirrhosis awaiting liver transplantation. A randomized placebo-controlled trial. *J Hepatol* 2018; **69**: 1250-1259 [PMID: 30138685 DOI: 10.1016/j.jhep.2018.08.006]

95 **Senzolo M**, Cholongitas E, Burra P, Leandro G, Thalheimer U, Patch D, Burroughs AK. beta-Blockers protect against spontaneous bacterial peritonitis in cirrhotic patients: a meta-analysis. *Liver Int* 2009; **29**: 1189-1193 [PMID: 19508620 DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-3231.2009.02038.x]

**Footnotes**

**Conflict-of-interest statement:** The Authors have nothing to disclose regarding this manuscript.

**Open-Access:** This article is an open-access article that was selected by an in-house editor and fully peer-reviewed by external reviewers. It is distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial (CC BY-NC 4.0) license, which permits others to distribute, remix, adapt, build upon this work non-commercially, and license their derivative works on different terms, provided the original work is properly cited and the use is non-commercial. See: http://creativecommons.org/Licenses/by-nc/4.0/

**Manuscript source:** Invited manuscript

**Peer-review started:** February 24, 2021

**First decision:** June 4, 2021

**Article in press:**

**Specialty type:** Gastroenterology and hepatology

**Country/Territory of origin:** Italy

**Peer-review report’s scientific quality classification**

Grade A (Excellent): 0

Grade B (Very good): B

Grade C (Good): 0

Grade D (Fair): 0

Grade E (Poor): 0

**P-Reviewer:** Trifan A **S-Editor:** Fan JR **L-Editor:** Filipodia **P-Editor:**

**Table 1** **Current recommendations and uncertainties regarding antibiotic prophylaxis in patients with cirrhosis**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Procedure/clinical setting** | **Antibiotic prophylaxis** | **Areas of uncertainties** |
| Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis | Primary prophylaxis recommended in decompensated patients with low ascitic fluid proteins. Secondary prophylaxis recommended | Second-line antibiotics. Quinolone resistance. Rifaximin. Secondary prophylaxis after MDR infection |
| Variceal bleeding | Prophylaxis recommended in acute bleeding from esophageal/gastric variceal bleeding | Prophylaxis in compensated (*e.g.*, Child-Pugh A) patients having acute variceal bleeding. Prophylaxis in elective endoscopic therapy of gastric/esophageal varices |
| Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography | Routine prophylaxis not recommended. Prophylaxis is recommended in patients with incomplete drainage and in those with primary sclerosing cholangitis |  |
| Transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt | Prophylaxis should be considered in difficult procedures | Prophylaxis in patients with thrombosed transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt undergoing invasive procedures |
| Radiofrequency ablation. Trans-arterial chemoembolization. Radioembolization | Routine prophylaxis not recommended. Advisable in patients with prior interventions on biliary tree | Intra-procedural antibiotic instillation |
| Liver transplantation | Routine prophylaxis is recommended | Length of prophylaxis |
| Severe alcoholic hepatitis receiving steroids | Prophylaxis would be preferable | Length of prophylaxis, antibiotic class  |
| Acute liver failure | Prophylaxis is advisable in high-risk patients, or those waiting for liver transplant | Antibiotic class  |