

World Journal of *Hepatology*

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ABOUT COVER

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AIMS AND SCOPE

The primary aim of *World Journal of Hepatology* (*WJH*, *World J Hepatol*) is to provide scholars and readers from various fields of hepatology with a platform to publish high-quality basic and clinical research articles and communicate their research findings online.

WJH mainly publishes articles reporting research results and findings obtained in the field of hepatology and covering a wide range of topics including chronic cholestatic liver diseases, cirrhosis and its complications, clinical alcoholic liver disease, drug induced liver disease autoimmune, fatty liver disease, genetic and pediatric liver diseases, hepatocellular carcinoma, hepatic stellate cells and fibrosis, liver immunology, liver regeneration, hepatic surgery, liver transplantation, biliary tract pathophysiology, non-invasive markers of liver fibrosis, viral hepatitis.

INDEXING/ABSTRACTING

The *WJH* is now abstracted and indexed in PubMed, PubMed Central, Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Scopus, Reference Citation Analysis, China Science and Technology Journal Database, and Superstar Journals Database. The 2023 Edition of Journal Citation Reports® cites the 2022 impact factor (IF) for *WJH* as 2.4.

RESPONSIBLE EDITORS FOR THIS ISSUE

Production Editor: Yi-Xuan Cai; Production Department Director: Xu Guo; Editorial Office Director: Xiang Li.

NAME OF JOURNAL

World Journal of Hepatology

ISSN

ISSN 1948-5182 (online)

LAUNCH DATE

October 31, 2009

FREQUENCY

Monthly

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Nikolaos Pyrsopoulos, Ke-Qin Hu, Koo Jeong Kang

EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATE EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS**

<https://www.wjgnet.com/1948-5182/editorialboard.htm>

PUBLICATION DATE

February 27, 2024

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PUBLISHING PARTNER

Department of Infectious Diseases, the Second Affiliated Hospital of Xi'an Jiaotong University

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

<https://www.wjgnet.com/bpg/gerinfo/204>

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Shuang-Suo Dang

ARTICLE PROCESSING CHARGE

<https://www.wjgnet.com/bpg/gerinfo/242>

STEPS FOR SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS

<https://www.wjgnet.com/bpg/GerInfo/239>

ONLINE SUBMISSION

<https://www.f6publishing.com>

PUBLISHING PARTNER'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE

http://2yuan.xjtu.edu.cn/Html/Departments/Main/Index_21148.html



Insights into skullcap herb-induced liver injury

Jonathan Soldera

Specialty type: Gastroenterology and hepatology

Provenance and peer review: Invited article; Externally peer reviewed.

Peer-review model: Single blind

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: Zhou S, China

Received: November 26, 2023

Peer-review started: November 26, 2023

First decision: January 9, 2024

Revised: January 14, 2024

Accepted: January 29, 2024

Article in press: January 29, 2024

Published online: February 27, 2024



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Abstract

This editorial addresses the growing concern of herb-induced liver injury (HILI), focusing on a unique case of Skullcap-induced HILI report. This editorial underscore the significant mortality rate linked to Skullcap-induced HILI, emphasizing the importance of vigilant monitoring and intervention. As herbal supplement usage rises, collaboration among clinicians and researchers is crucial to comprehend and address the complexities of HILI, particularly those involving Skullcap.

Key Words: Herb-induced liver injury; Drug induced liver injury; Dietary supplements; Herbal hepatotoxicity; Liver transplantation

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Core Tip: This study presents a comprehensive analysis of herb-induced liver injury (HILI), focusing on a unique case report of drug-induced autoimmune hepatitis due to Skullcap supplements and a systematic review/meta-analysis of 936 HILI cases associated with 79 herbs. Notably, Skullcap-induced HILI demonstrated hepatocellular patterns and mild-to-moderate severity, emphasizing the importance of recognizing potential adverse events associated with herbal dietary supplements. The study's findings underscore the need for increased awareness and vigilance in monitoring HILI, particularly in the context of rising herbal supplement usage.

Citation: Soldera J. Insights into skullcap herb-induced liver injury. *World J Hepatol* 2024; 16(2): 120-122

URL: <https://www.wjgnet.com/1948-5182/full/v16/i2/120.htm>

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4254/wjh.v16.i2.120>

INTRODUCTION

The growing popularity of traditional herbal dietary supplements (HDS) has prompted discussions regarding their potential association with liver injury, currently named Herb Induced Liver Injury (HILI). A case study reported by Thakral *et al*[1] published in the *World Journal of Hepatology* highlights a distinctive occurrence of autoimmune hepatitis induced by Skullcap supplements. This specific case underscores the significance of identifying potential adverse events associated with the utilization of HDS, particularly considering the rising prevalence of their use among the general population.

The reported case involves a middle-aged woman with no prior health issues, who developed sudden jaundice after four months of consuming Skullcap mushroom supplements. The case report indicates that despite testing negative for multiple chronic liver diseases, the first liver biopsy detected severe drug-induced liver injury in resolution. The patient's condition worsened, leading to a subsequent diagnosis of autoimmune hepatitis, with a positive response to discontinuation of the supplement.

In parallel, a comprehensive systematic review and meta-analysis by Ballotin *et al*[2] aimed to identify herbal products associated with HILI. The study, published in the *World Journal of Clinical Cases*, analyzed 936 cases reported in 446 references, identifying 79 types of herbs related to HILI. Skullcap-induced HILI typically manifested in individuals using the dried leaves and stems of *Scutellaria* spp. for various purposes, including the treatment of anxiety, stress, and insomnia. The onset of symptoms and jaundice occurred within one week to three months, with a pattern of typically hepatocellular liver injury, with a few cases of mixed hepatocellular and cholestatic liver injury. The dose that was ingested varied greatly Skullcap, ranging from 400 mg to 16 g daily. Skullcap-induced HILI was more prevalent among females and the mean age was 54 years-old. Common symptoms encompass nausea and choloria, with affected patients frequently reporting osteoarthritis and hypertension. Generally, HILI induced by Skullcap exhibits mild-to-moderate severity, resolving promptly upon discontinuation of the herb. This cessation typically results in the normalization of liver function tests within a period of 12 wk. However, in the systematic review by Ballotin *et al*[2] reveals a considerable mortality rate of 14.2% was described, and in some severe cases, liver transplantation was necessary, potentially influenced by publication bias favoring the reporting of more severe outcomes.

Both studies underscore the generally positive prognosis of HILI following discontinuation of the implicated herbal product. However, they also elucidate the potential for severity, emphasizing the need for vigilant monitoring and intervention. This severity is reflected in a significant mortality rate associated with Skullcap-induced HILI.

CONCLUSION

In summary, there is an urgent need for increased awareness concerning the potential hepatotoxic effects of herbal supplements, with a specific focus on Skullcap. These cases emphasize the critical importance of recognizing and comprehending the patterns and outcomes linked to Skullcap-induced liver injury and other forms of HILI. As the usage of herbal supplements continues to escalate, fostering collaboration between clinicians and researchers becomes imperative to unravel the intricate nature of herb-induced liver injuries and guarantee the safe utilization of these products.

FOOTNOTES

Author contributions: Soldera J contributed to writing and reviewing the final draft of the manuscript.

Conflict-of-interest statement: All the authors report no relevant conflicts of interest for this article.

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S-Editor: Li L

L-Editor: A

P-Editor: Cai YX

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- 2 **Ballotin VR**, Bigarella LG, Brandão ABM, Balbinot RA, Balbinot SS, Soldera J. Herb-induced liver injury: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *World J Clin Cases* 2021; **9**: 5490-5513 [PMID: [34307603](#) DOI: [10.12998/wjcc.v9.i20.5490](#)]



Published by **Baishideng Publishing Group Inc**
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