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2 Natural interferon-beta treatment for patients with chronic hepatitis C in Japan

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Abstract

Chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection can cause liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). Several studies have demonstrated that the eradication of HCV reduces the occurrence of HCC. In Japan, as many people live to an advanced age, HCV-infected patients are also getting older, and the age at HCC diagnosis has also increased. Although older HCV-infected patients have a risk of developing HCC, the treatment response to peginterferon-alpha plus ribavirin therapy is relatively poor in these patients because of drop-out or discontinuation of this treatment due to adverse events. It is established that the mechanism of action between interferon-alpha and interferon-beta is slightly different. Short-term natural interferon-beta monotherapy is effective for patients with acute hepatitis C and patients infected with HCV genotype 2 and low viral loads. Natural interferon-beta plus ribavirin for 48 weeks or for 24 weeks are also effective for some patients with HCV genotype 1 or HCV genotype 2. Natural interferon-beta plus ribavirin has been used for certain "difficult-to-treat" HCV-infected

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