

Summary

HCV has been encountered worldwide with WHO estimates of 200 million infected patients worldwide. In 67-85% of acute hepatitis C infected individuals persists beyond 6 months and becomes chronic, while 85% of infected individuals start as chronic hepatitis C. This can progress to liver fibrosis and cirrhosis (20%) and then to decompensated cirrhosis (5%) or hepatocellular carcinoma (1%).

The aim of treatment in patients with chronic hepatitis C is eradication of serum HCV RNA with improvement in health related quality of life and to prevent the development of cirrhosis or hepatocellular carcinoma. The addition of ribavirin to INF results in two to three folds higher sustained virological response rates compared with INF monotherapy. The recent availability of the modified longer acting pegylated INF has further enhanced virological response rates when used in combination with ribavirin leading to a sustained virological response in more than 50% of infected patients.

In our study, a trial was done to find out the occurrence of eye complications as a side effect of antiviral therapy (Peg INF plus ribavirin) in treatment of chronic hepatitis C infected patients.

Our study was done on 120 patients of chronic HCV infection. 100 patients as a study group who were receiving antiviral therapy (Pegylated Interferon injections once a week, plus 800-1200mg of ribavirin daily for 48 weeks, and 20 patients as a control group who did not receive antiviral therapy.

All patients were subjected to:

- Full history taking.
- Complete clinical examination.
- Laboratory investigations including:
 - Complete blood count (CBC).
 - Liver function tests.
 - Renal function tests.
 - PCR for HCV RNA.
- Complete ophthalmological examinations.

This study showed that:

- The number of patients with eye complications (interferon retinopathy) was one patient at 12th week and another patient at 24th week.
- The Percent of patients with eye complications that need to discontinue interferon and ribavirin therapy was (100%) (Number =2/2) during the complete period of treatment and then they could complete the total course of treatment after the IFN-induced retinopathy resolved.
- The eye complications (interferon retinopathy) are a rare complication with interferon and ribavirin therapy in chronic hepatitis C patients.