

PREVALENCE, SEVERITY AND COURSE OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMATOLOGY IN CHRONIC HEPATITIS C PATIENTS ON PEGYLATED INTERFERON ALPHA: A 72-WEEK PROSPECTIVE STUDY

Z. Pavlovic¹, M. Jasovic-Gasic², D. Delic^{2,3}, N.P. Maric^{1,2}, O. Vukovic^{1,2}, S. Pejovic¹

¹Clinic for Psychiatry, Clinical Center of Serbia, ²School of Medicine, University of Belgrade, ³Institute of Infectious and Tropical Diseases 'Prof. Dr. Kosta Todorović', Clinical Center of Serbia, Belgrade, Serbia

Introduction: Treatment with pegylated interferon alpha (PEG-IFN- α) in patients with chronic hepatitis C (CHC) is associated with depression more frequently than in other diseases treated with PEG-IFN- α .

Objective: To prospectively evaluate prevalence, severity and course of depressive symptomatology in CHC patients treated with PEG-IFN- α .

Methods: Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HAMD) was used to assess depressive symptoms in 103 subjects with CHC before PEG-IFN- α (mean dose 152.6 \pm 25.6 mcg; duration of therapy 48 weeks) and at the follow-up visits (4th, 12th, 24th, 48th, 72th week). Control group included 103 subjects with CHC without PEG-IFN- α .

Results: There was a significant increase in HAMD scores as early as in the 4th week of PEG-IFN- α therapy compared to baseline scores (38.8% vs. 24.3%). The peak of depressive symptomatology was detected in the 12th week (mean HAMD 9.34 \pm 6.93), when a half of patients (49.5%) had HAMD above 7. At the end of the treatment (48th week), 38.8 % had HAMD above 7, and in the 72nd week (24 weeks without PEG-IFN- α), prevalence of depressive symptomatology was decreased to the values lower than at baseline (23.3% vs. 24.3%). The majority (28.2%) had mild depression, whereas moderate and severe depressive symptoms were found in 20.4% and 1%, respectively. No change in prevalence of depression was detected in control group.

Conclusion: Present study is the longest follow-up study of depressive symptoms as a side-effect of PEG-IFN- α in CHC. Our data yielded that the severity of the symptoms was mild to moderate and tends to decrease following therapy completion.