

Epidemiology and Natural History of Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

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Abstract

Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) is being increasingly recognized as a common liver disorder associated with one or more manifestations of metabolic syndrome. Liver morphology comprises a wide spectrum ranging from accumulation of fat within hepatocytes (steatosis) to associated inflammation and fibrosis (steatohepatitis); some cases progress to cirrhosis, liver failure or liver cancer. Prevalence rates of NAFLD have been variously reported depending on age, gender, BMI and presence of associated diseases especially Type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM). Geographic epidemiology of NAFLD cuts across developing and developed world. NAFLD is a slowly progressive disease. The course of illness is variable, and is determined largely by the presence or absence of necro-inflammatory changes and fibrosis. The presence of such changes indicates likely progression to cirrhosis, liver failure and hepatic carcinoma thus portending adverse prognosis both with respect of morbidity and life expectancy.