



Title:Vitamin K cuts hepatocellular ca mortality. (Stops Portal Vein Invasion).(Brief Article)

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SAN FRANCISCO -- Oral vitamin K markedly improves survival in patients with hepatocellular carcinoma, Dr. Yukihiro Koike said at the annual Digestive Disease Week.

This simple therapy works by preventing tumor extension into the portal vein, a common event that heralds greatly diminished survival in this traditionally poor-prognosis cancer, explained Dr. Koike, who is with Kanto Chuo Hospital, Tokyo.

He reported on 121 patients with hepatocellular carcinoma who were randomized to get oral vitamin K 1145 mg/day or not. All patients received conventional therapy with percutaneous tumor ablation and/or transcatheter arterial embolization.

The rate of portal vein invasion at 12 months of follow-up was 2% in vitamin K-II recipients and 23% in controls. At 2 years, portal vein invasion was present in 23% of the vitamin K-II group and 47% of controls.

One-year survival in patients treated with vitamin K-II was 76%, compared with 66% in controls. Two-year survival was 66% in the vitamin K-II group and just 28% in controls.

Dr. Koike has previously shown that vitamin K inhibits hepatocellular carcinoma cell growth in vitro. "We hypothesized that something as yet unknown decreases the concentration of vitamin K in hepatocellular carcinoma tissue, leading to more active tumor growth and invasion," the gastroenterologist explained.

The Japanese trial generated considerable excitement among hepatologists. Dr. Arun J. Sanyal, secretary of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, pronounced it perhaps the most important study in the field to come out of this year's Digestive Disease Week, one which, if confirmed, will surely change the standard of care.

"There isn't a lot to offer patients with liver cancer--and this new treatment may significantly prolong survival," said Dr. Sanyal, professor of medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond.

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