PREVALENCE AND PREDICTORS OF MALNUTRITION IN PATIENTS WITH HEPATOCELLULAR CANCER – A PROSPECTIVE STUDY FROM A REFERRAL CANCER CENTER

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In a prospective study of 200 untreated hepatocellular cancer patients at a referral center, 70% were malnourished at diagnosis using Subjective Global Assessment, with AFP levels above 400 ng/ml and Child B or C cirrhosis identified as significant predictors.

KEY POINTS

- 70% of HCC patients were malnourished at diagnosis by SGA (51% moderately, 19% severely), while MUST identified 74% and MNA 90% as malnourished or at risk.
- MUST showed moderate concordance with SGA (kappa 0.520), while MNA showed only fair agreement (kappa 0.294); MUST had 88.57% sensitivity and 61.67% specificity, MNA had 97.14% sensitivity but only 26.67% specificity.
- AFP levels above 400 ng/ml increased malnutrition likelihood 3.42-fold (95% CI 1.68-6.97, p=0.001) and Child B or C cirrhosis increased it 3.86-fold (95% CI 1.74-8.60, p=0.001) on multivariate analysis.
- BMI under 18.5 kg/m2 was present in only 17% of patients, while low calf circumference was seen in 70%, indicating that BMI and standard anthropometry underestimated malnutrition prevalence compared to validated screening tools.
- The cohort comprised predominantly males (88%) with mean age 56 years, 86% had cirrhosis, and 56% had AFP above 400 ng/ml, with most patients (79%) presenting at BCLC stage B, C, or D.

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