

Clinical picture and prevalence of itch

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Presentation

Education & Training

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Itch is highly prevalent across all liver diseases including non-cholestatic conditions, yet remains under-documented and undertreated in clinical practice.

KEY POINTS

- The speaker reported that approximately 40% of patients with viral hepatitis and cirrhosis experience clinically significant itch, and one-third of patients in NASH trials reported itch, indicating pruritus is common beyond cholestatic liver disease.
- In cholestatic diseases, the speaker stated itch prevalence is very high: nearly 90% in primary biliary cholangitis cohorts, 91% in a primary sclerosing cholangitis survey, and 100% in intrahepatic cholestasis of pregnancy by definition.
- The speaker reported that in primary sclerosing cholangitis patients, 96% experienced sleep disturbance due to itch, 58% had mood changes, and 22% missed work or school, demonstrating substantial quality-of-life impact.
- The speaker stated that only 40% of health records documented itch when patients reported it in primary biliary cholangitis, and symptom assessment rates were 60% against a target of 90%.
- The speaker reported that only 24% of patients in a UK cohort received guideline-recommended cholestyramine and only 50% of US patients reported receiving any itch treatment, indicating significant treatment gaps.
- The speaker recommended that clinicians systematically ask about and document itch, include symptom assessment tools in outpatient clinics, and improve adherence to treatment recommendations.

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