

## **RIBAVIRIN PLUS PEGYLATED INTERFERON IN THE TREATMENT OF CHRONIC HEPATITIS B AND C**

Ching-Chih Hu MD,<sup>1</sup> Rong-Nan Chien MD,<sup>1</sup> I-Shyan Sheen MD,<sup>2</sup> Yun-Fan Liaw MD,<sup>2</sup> Cho-Li Yen MD,<sup>1</sup> Jia-Jang Chang MD<sup>1</sup>

Liver Research Unit, Chang Gung Memorial Hospital and University, Keelung<sup>1</sup> and Taipei,<sup>2</sup> Taiwan

**BACKGROUND/AIMS:** Concurrent chronic hepatitis B virus and hepatitis C virus infection appears to increase the risk of progressive liver disease and therapies for them have been unsatisfactory. We conducted a prospective study using ribavirin plus pegylated interferon to treat chronic hepatitis B and C patients.

**METHODS:** A total of 47 patients with clinically and pathologically verified chronic hepatitis B and C were included. All patients received pegylated interferon alfa 2a or 2b via subcutaneous injection once weekly plus oral ribavirin 800-1200 mg daily for 24 weeks. Regular clinical assessment, biochemical and virological follow-up were performed. Treatment efficacy was assessed at the end of the 24-week treatment (EOT) and 24-week follow-up (EOF). Statistical analysis was performed using Chi-square test, Fisher's exact test and stepwise logistical regression model where appropriate.

**RESULTS:** The mean age was 56 years with 72% male. Twenty-eight percent had liver cirrhosis. All patients were seropositive for HCV RNA and 64 % were infected with genotype 1b, in contrast to 17% who were seropositive for HBV DNA. The mean pretherapy levels of biochemical tests were: ALT 158 U/L; total bilirubin 1.0 mg/dL; albumin 4.4 gm/dL. At EOT, the ALT normalization rate (biochemical response, BR), HCV seroclearance rate (virological response; VR) or both (complete response; CR) were 65%, 84% and 61%, respectively. When assessed at EOF, the BR, VR and CR were 54%, 57% and 39%, respectively. The stepwise logistical regression analysis showed no clinical predictor to response.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Ribavirin plus pegylated interferon was effective in the treatment of chronic hepatitis B and C.

**Keyword:** chronic hepatitis B and C, ribavirin plus pegylated interferon, biochemical and virological response