

NON-ALCOHOLIC FATTY LIVER DISEASE

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Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), is the most commonly diagnosed form of liver disease in Hepatology clinics and often associated with type II Diabetes Mellitus and Metabolic Syndrome. Whilst it is known that chronic liver disease (Cirrhosis) is associated with Hepatocellular Carcinoma in most of liver diseases, in NAFLD however, the incidence and prevalence of Hepatocellular Carcinoma is rising and hence, it is imperative that health care professionals endeavour to raise awareness on preventative measures of the disease and the importance of early detection. This would ensure that NAFLD finds its place in public discourse, to minimise the burden that such diseases have on the health system, in addition to the person affected by the disease. Causative factors are plentiful, starting from a genetic predisposition (proven by the recurrence of the disease after liver transplant) to environmental factors, not limited to obesity and lack of exercise, concluding with other pathologies, which are notably the primary cause of NAFLD; namely Diabetes, Hyperlipidaemia, Insulin Resistance and Metabolic Syndrome, amongst others. Diagnostic tools are available, accessible, affordable and non-invasive (such as blood markers and imaging). Previously, treatment was limited to life style changes (exercise and diet), coupled with treating the associated diseases (Diabetes, Insulin resistant and Hyperlipidaemia). This is no longer the case, with the introduction of specific medication recently, that is aimed at reversing the histopathological as well as the biochemical abnormalities associated with the disease to prevent progression to chronic liver disease (Cirrhosis with or without complications).

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