



The Royal College of Pathologists

NICE HTA - Interferon alfa (pegylated and non pegylated) and ribavirin for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C - part review of existing guidance no.75

Interferon alpha and ribavirin for the treatment of mild chronic hepatitis C.

In the review of the scoring systems used to assess chronic hepatitis C liver biopsies on page 25 it is stated that Metavir scores necroinflammatory grade on a scale of 0 to 3. This is not accurate. The Metavir paper scores activity (grade) as piecemeal necrosis from 0 to 3 and lobular necrosis from 0 to 2. In this respect it is analogous to the other systems in separating the components of piecemeal necrosis and parenchymal necroinflammatory activity. Fibrosis (stage) is correctly quoted as being scored from 0 to 4.

In the first bullet point at the bottom of page 26 it is true that biopsy may not give a representative picture of liver pathology. However liver biopsy in chronic hepatitis C always identifies the minimum level of disease activity and stage that is present.

If the NICE recommendation remains that mild chronic hepatitis C should be treated with pegylated interferon and ribavirin then it follows that a liver biopsy to differentiate mild from moderate chronic liver disease and thus select patients suitable for treatment is no longer required. The points made in the above paragraphs will not influence that recommendation. Subsequently the indications for liver biopsy in any particular patient with chronic hepatitis C will then be determined by other clinical criteria.

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