

ReachMD Announcer:

Welcome to ReachMD. This medical industry feature titled, “Evaluating the Rise of HCC & New Risk to Progression: A NAFLD/NASH Case Study” is sponsored by Exact Sciences.

Here’s Dr. Jeffrey Schneider.

Dr. Schneider:

In the United States, incidence rates of hepatocellular carcinoma, or HCC for short, the most common form of liver cancer, are rapidly increasing. Of all the HCC etiologies, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, or NAFLD, and its dangerous fibrotic subset, non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, or NASH, are on the rise. NAFLD affects 30 to 40% of the U.S. population. About 5 to 20% of NAFLD patients have NASH.

Let's take a look at a patient case highly in the increased risk of NASH, Bernie. Bernie has many of the risk factors for developing NASH, including metabolic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and obesity. In the past, I saw Bernie maybe once a week, but now I see him two or three times a day. And so, we need to identify potentially dangerous advanced fibrosis in NAFLD patients. Analyzing objective data and taking advantage of non-invasive fibrosis testing can provide insights into underlying advanced liver diseases. In addition, once we detect cirrhosis of these patients, a guideline-recommended standard of care performing serial ultrasound with or without alpha fetoprotein is recommended. But this method has room for improvement. Ultrasound is inconsistent, and alpha fetoprotein is poor in finding early-stage HCC. A typical and clinically dissatisfying ultrasound impression for these patients has often been the following: a limited study obscured by bowel gas, liver with heterogeneous echo texture consistent with fatty liver.

These challenges make it difficult to diagnose at-risk HCC patients in the early stages of liver cancer when there are more curative options. So just to bring all this together, rates of HCC are on the rise in the U.S., and awareness and identification of NAFLD, NASH and the risk of progression to HCC are key components to detecting HCC early. So, if you'd like to learn even more about this important disease and Bernie, please visit the related content section to view the webinars. I'm Dr. Jeffrey Schneider and thank you for joining me.

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