

Finding ways out of the conundrum that is acute liver failure management: The Gastro Foundation acute liver failure symposium

Many an experienced clinician will find him or herself daunted by the presentation of a patient in acute liver failure. Accurate goal directed management strategies are paramount to ensuring a good outcome in a patient at very high risk of mortality. Erroneous decision-making often closes the small window of opportunity to save these patient's lives and knowing where to turn for help and advice could make all the difference.

In view of the above the concept of hosting an acute liver failure management symposium was born. Input and advice from leaders in the field were presented in a concise, practically applicable manner covering topics from basics to experimental approaches in dealing with the patient in fulminant liver failure.

The meeting was held at the Radisson Gautrain hotel on 11 May 2019. Prof Chris Kassianides, one of the founding members of the Gastro Foundation, opened the morning with a warm welcome to all and the morning got underway with an opening talk by Prof Adam Mohammed on the diagnosis and local patterns of aetiology of acute liver failure in Southern Africa.

Dr. Tim de Maayer followed with an enlightening presentation on pediatric liver failure, covering common ground with its adult counterpart, and highlighting important differences between adult and pediatric liver failure. The intensive care management is often one of the most challenging aspects of the care of these patients. Dr. Lliam Branningham provided clear guidelines on how to deal with common problems faced by these critically ill patients in the intensive care setting. A presentation given by Dr. Bilal Bobat on the concept of acute on chronic liver failure rounded off the session. The latter gave way to some lively debate amongst the delegates and after important consensus was reached the group broke for refreshments.

Following a delicious brunch and an opportunity to greet old friends and colleagues, the second session of the morning got underway. Prof. Jean Botha started by presenting guidelines on when to refer patients in acute liver failure for transplantation. Owing to the intricacies of managing these patients, the principle of referring early to a center with experience in the management of acute liver failure, with transplant capabilities was emphasized.

Dr. Sharan Rambarran followed with a very intriguing and stimulating talk on the current state and future direction of bridging therapies in liver failure and Prof Graham Paget tackled the issue that is ABO incompatible liver transplantation.

The group enjoyed a refreshment break after which Prof Jonas presented a talk on the controversial topic of alcohol induced liver failure. Dr. Greg Johnson gave the last talk of the day with insight given into the challenges of managing the psychological aspects of patients and families who survive acute liver failure.

In one morning a huge number of important issues surrounding the care of patients with acute liver failure got addressed and discussed. Important networking occurred between clinicians who often work in isolation and clear channels of communications were established. This is critical to ensure improved survival of these very challenging patients.

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