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Liver disease and pharmacotherapy for alcoholism

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A common clinical question to Addiction specialists concerns whether a medication to treat a patient's alcoholism should be used and if so, when could such be commenced given the patient has liver disease. Alcohol consumption itself is a principal driver of alcoholic liver disease and as such, should prompt treatment intervention. While there is a reasonable evidence for medications that treat alcoholism, very little evidence exists to guide the decision to use such medication in the presence of clinically significant liver disease. This presentation reviews recent literature on pharmacotherapy for alcohol dependence relating particularly to patients having comorbid liver disease and alcoholism. It concludes with an outline for a Risk versus Benefit approach to pharmacotherapy decision-making.

Biography

Mike McDonough is a Consultant Physician in the Unit of Medical Education in the Department of Medicine & Radiology, Northern Health, a Medical Director of Health Services at Western Health.

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