

Ozempic reduces severity of liver disease in people with HIV, study shows

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Bengaluru: A weekly injection of semaglutide was safe and reduced the amount of fat in the liver by 31 per cent in people with HIV and a type of liver disease, data from a mid-stage study funded by the National Institutes of Health showed.

Data from the study was first released on Monday at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Denver, Colorado.

This is the first trial showing the effects of semaglutide in HIV patients with a type of liver disease known as Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD).

Semaglutide is the active ingredient in Novo Nordisk's popular weight loss drug Wegovy and diabetes treatment Ozempic.

MASLD, previously known as nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, is characterized by the accumulation of excess fat in the liver that is not caused by alcohol consumption or viral hepatitis.

The study enrolled adult patients with the disease whose viral load - the amount of HIV in the blood - was suppressed to undetectable levels by antiretroviral therapy (ART).

Patients saw an average 31 per cent reduction in liver fat, with 29 per cent of participants experiencing a complete resolution of MASLD, resulting in their liver fat decreasing to 5 per cent or less of overall liver content.

Of the 49 patients included in the data analysis, 40 were taking ART regimens containing a class of drugs known as integrase strand transfer inhibitors.

Integrase strand transfer inhibitors have shown to be effective for suppressing HIV, but are also associated with weight gain in some patients.

Eli Lilly's tirzepatide, the active ingredient in its popular diabetes drug Mounjaro, helped up to 74 per cent of patients achieve absence of a severe type of fatty liver disease with no worsening of liver scarring at 52 weeks in a mid-stage trial.

Lilly's trial is testing its drug in patients without HIV.

Novo is testing semaglutide in a separate late-stage trial in patients with the same condition.

(Reporting by Sriparna Roy in Bengaluru; Editing by Krishna Chandra Eluri)

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