

非酒精性脂肪肝病Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

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Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) has become a common cause of chronic liver disease worldwide and its prevalence continues to increase in parallel with the epidemic of obesity and diabetes. Fatty liver is defined as the content of intra-hepatic triglyceride more than 5% of liver weight. Thus, NAFLD is diagnosed based on the presence of fatty liver plus exclusion of other known chronic liver diseases such as alcohol, virus-induced etc. This condition has a wide spectrum of pathological findings, ranging from simple steatosis to steatohepatitis (NASH), which can progress to liver cirrhosis (LC) or even hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). In clinical practice, the presence of fatty liver is usually confirmed by imaging studies such as ultrasonography, computed tomography or proton magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS). NAFLD correlates with obesity and diabetes. It is also considered as liver manifestation of metabolic syndrome (MS). Furthermore, patients of NAFLD are found to have less life expectancy than general population. The reasons included the increased mortality from cardiovascular disease, liver complications or non-liver cancers.

In summary, NAFLD becomes an increasing important issue due to a rising prevalence and higher liver or non-liver related mortality compared with general population. It has some un-resolved problems including the lack of non-invasive methods to detect the presence of NASH and effective medical treatment. In addition, new concept about the impact of gut bacteria on the development of NAFLD needs further evidence to confirm.