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## **Talk Objectives**

- 1. What is chronic liver disease?
- 2. Complications of chronic liver disease.
- 3. Pathophysiology of cirrhosis and ACLF
  - 4. CANONIC AND PREDICT studies
- 5. Why are clinicians interested in the gut microbiome in cirrhosis?
  - 6. Manipulating the gut microbiome in cirrhosis
    - 7. Albumin
    - 8. Rifaximin
- 9. MICROB-PREDICT Study from a clinician's standpoint











## Chronic Liver Failure



#### STAGES OF LIVER DAMAGE



## Spectrum of Liver Disease

- Acute fulminant liver failure (rare)
  - 1 6 cases per million per year
- Chronic Liver Disease
  - 4% population
- Top 3 causes of cirrhosis in Europe
  - 1. Alcohol
  - 2. Fat
  - 3. Hepatitis C





## **Classic Complications of Cirrhosis**



<sup>1</sup>Khungar V, Poordad F. Clin Liver Dis 2012;16:73-89.



1 in 6 patients with cirrhosis develop hepatocellular carcinoma

# Time between referral to a liver clinic and the first admission with cirrhosis or liver failure



Original analysis of 4313 first admissions between 1996 and 2012 with cirrhosis or liver failure by International Classification of diseases-10 code to University Hospitals Southampton, UK. Data are from Emma Greatorex (University Hospital Southampton Trust, Southampton, UK, personal communication). Analysed by Nick Sheron.

The Lancet 2014 384, 1953-1997DOI: (10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61838-9)

# Consequences of Liver Decompensation and Chronic liver failure

- Jaundice
- Portal hypertension and bleeding
- Ascites
- Encephalopathy
- Renal Dysfunction
- Hyponatremia
- Anorexia
- Muscle Wasting
- Immune dysfunction and inflammation
- Infection
- Hepatocellular Cancer



## Pathogenesis of Ascites and Hepatorenal Syndrome



## Hepatorenal Syndrome

Intense renal vasoconstriction secondary to activation of a number of vasoconstrictor mechanisms and an imbalance between intra-renal vasodilators and vasoconstrictors.



A – Angiogram in a patient with cirrhosis and HRS demonstrating intense vasoconstriction and poor arterial filling.

B – Post-mortem angiogram in same kidney demonstrating intact renal vasculature

Epstein O et al. 1970



## Ascites formation



#### Ascites



## Ruptured umbilical hernia





## Varices



15% Bleed Annually

Lower esophagus

Portal Pressure >12mmHg Upper stomach

Esophageal

varices

## Hepatic Encephalopathy

- 60-80% of patients with cirrhosis have evidence of neurocognitive dysfunction on neuropsychological function testing
- Short term memory loss
- Slow reaction times
- Impairs ability to drive and do fine motor tasks
- Spectrum of hepatic encephalopathy
- Confusion
- Aggression
- Asterixis (liver flap)
- Disorientation
- Drowsiness

Coma







#### Hepatic Encephalopathy



## Mortality rates over 5 years for cirrhotic patients



## Hospital re-admissions among patients with decompensated cirrhosis are common



#### **Hospital Readmissions**

- Retrospective study of 402 patients from an academic transplant centre
- Follow-up time censored at death, elective admissions such as transplant or post-procedure observation, or the date of last clinic note; median follow-up was 203 days
- Population included cirrhotic patients hospitalized for ascites, spontaneous bacterial peritonitis, renal failure, hepatic encephalopathy, or variceal hemorrhage
- Median time to first readmission was 67 days
- Median number of readmissions was 2 (range 0-40); overall rate was 3 hospitalizations/person-years

## Acute on Chronic Liver Failure

Three major features characterize this syndrome:

- 1. It occurs in the context of intense systemic inflammation
- 2. Frequently develops in close temporal relationship with proinflammatory precipitating events (e.g., infections or alcoholic hepatitis)
- 3. Is associated with single- or multiple-organ failure.

## **CANONIC STUDY**



according to the grade of ACLF.

Moreau et al. Gastroenterology 2013

## ACLF

Organ System	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points		
Liver	Bilirubin <6 mg/dl	Bilirubin 6.0–11.9 mg/dl	Bilirubin ≥12 mg/dl		
Kidney	Creatinine <1.5 mg/dl Creatinine 1.5–1.9 mg/dl	Creatinine 2.0–3.4 mg/dl	Creatinine ≥3.5 mg/dl or RRT		
Brain (West Haven criteria)	Grade 0	Grade 1–2	Grade 3–4		
Coagulation	INR <2.0	INR 2.0–2.4	INR ≥2.5		
Circulation	MAP ≥70 mm Hg	MAP <70 mm Hg	Vasopressor requirement		
Respiration	Pao <sub>2</sub> /Fio <sub>2</sub> >300 Spo <sub>2</sub> /Fio <sub>2</sub> >357	Pao <sub>2</sub> /Fio <sub>2</sub> 201–300 Spo <sub>2</sub> /Fio <sub>2</sub> 215–357	Pao <sub>2</sub> /Fıo <sub>2</sub> ≤200 Spo <sub>2</sub> /Fıo <sub>2</sub> ≤214		

#### EASL CLIF Score





#### The PREDICT study uncovers three clinical courses of acutely decompensated cirrhosis that have distinct pathophysiology



- Patients with acutely decompensated cirrhosis without ACLF develop 3 different clinical courses.
- Patients with pre-ACLF develop ACLF within 90 days and have high systemic inflammation and mortality.
- Patients with unstable decompensated cirrhosis suffer from complications of severe portal hypertension.
- Patients with stable decompensated cirrhosis have less frequent complications and lower 1-year mortality risk.

Trebicka J et al. Journal of Hepatology 2020



Infection as a precipitant of acute decompensation /ACLF



PREDICT identifies precipitating events associated with the clinical course of acutely decompensated cirrhosis

Trebicka J et al. Journal of Hepatology 2021



Role of inflammation and infection as a driver of ACLF

Casulleras M et al. Cells 2020

## The rise of the gut microbiome









Your **gut microbiome** is a vast community of trillions of bacteria and fungi that inhabit your gastrointestinal tract, and have a major influence on your metabolism, body weight, propensity to illness, immune system, appetite and mood.

The gut and liver are intimately linked





As the liver receives the majority of its blood supply directly from the microbiota laden gut, via the portal vein, inherently the gut microbiome and the liver are intimately linked.

#### Mechanisms linking the microbiome to the development of hepatic steatosis



Intestinal microbiota can contribute to the development of hepatic steatosis through a variety of mechanisms:

- 1. Appetite regulation
- 2. Energy extraction from diet.
- 3. Endotoxin release from the cell wall of Gram-negative bacteria increases peripheral insulin resistance leading to an increased influx of free fatty acids from the adipose tissue to the liver.
- 4. Ethanol production can be used as a substrate for lipogenesis in the liver but can also affect the gut barrier
- **5.** SCFA synthesis and bile acid homeostasis are perturbed.



## Gut microbiome in cirrhosis

#### 'Gut dysbiosis'

- Lose beneficial microbes in your gut
- Opportunistic bacteria take over (potentially harmful bacteria which are kept in check by beneficial microbes)
- You have less diversity in your gut





• Reduction in actinobacteria and firmicutes in cirrhosis

Patel VC et al. Results of a placebo-controlled double blind randomised trial to investigate the efficacy of rifaximin- $\alpha$  versus placebo in improving systemic inflammation in patients with cirrhosis and chronic hepatic encephalopathy (RIFSYS Trial). Journal of Hepatology 2018; 68: S105-364. LBA 005.



Healthy

Cirrhosis

- Increase in abundance of actinobacteria and firmicutes
- Reduction in bacteroides, proteobacteria and fusobacterium

Patel VC et al. Results of a placebo-controlled double blind randomised trial to investigate the efficacy of rifaximin- $\alpha$  versus placebo in improving systemic inflammation in patients with cirrhosis and chronic hepatic encephalopathy (RIFSYS Trial). Journal of Hepatology 2018; 68: S105-364. LBA 005.



Movement of bacteria from the gut lumen to the liver in health and in cirrhosis generates inflammation

Woodhouse C et al. APT 2018;47(2):192-202.

#### Gut microbiome manipulation to treat cirrhosis



Shawcross 2021

Existing and novel therapies that manipulate the gut microbiome in cirrhosis

### **Existing Therapies**

Diet
Lactulose
(prebiotic)
Antibiotics
(Rifaximin)
Probiotics



## **Novel therapies**

# □FMT □Bacteriophages □Carbalive<sup>™</sup> beads □Albumin?



#### Secondary prevention of Hepatic Encephalopathy with rifaximin



Proportion of patients experiencing a breakthrough of overt HE over 6 months

#### Treatment

Bass N, et al. New Engl J Med 2010;362:1071-81

#### Rifaximin: Numbers Needed to Treat



#### **Primary endpoint:**

Four patients would need to be treated with Rifaximin- $\alpha$  550 mg bd for 6 months to prevent one breakthrough of overt HE episode



#### Secondary endpoint:

Nine patients would need to be treated with Rifaximin- $\alpha$  550 mg bd for 6 months to prevent one hospitalisation involving hepatic encephalopathy

#### **RIFSYS** Trial



Patel VC, Lee S et al. Journal of Hepatology 2021 (in press)



Patel VC, Lee S et al. Journal of Hepatology 2021 (in press)



Rifaximin suppresses the growth of oral originating species in the gut microbiome and bacteria with mucin-degrading capacities

Patel VC, Lee S et al. Journal of Hepatology 2021 (in press)

## **Human Albumin Solution**



## Endogenous and exogenous binding sites in the albumin molecule

Many of the physiological functions of human serum albumin rely on its ability to reversibly bind to an extremely wide range of ligands to increase their solubility in plasma, to transport to specific tissues or organs or to dispose of them when they are toxic.





Albumin is the most important regulator of extracellular oxidative stress and presents many binding sites for reactive oxygen species.

The most important site is the Cys-34 residue, which can be reversibly or irreversibly oxidized.

## Albumin and Cirrhosis

- The systemic proinflammatory and pro-oxidant state of patients with decompensated cirrhosis drives structural and functional changes in the albumin molecule
- This interferes with its antioxidant, scavenging, immune- modulating and endothelium protective functions.
- International guidelines recommend the use of human albumin solution after large-volume paracentesis in patients with spontaneous bacterial peritonitis and hepatorenal syndrome.
- The optimal dosage and administration schedule and identification of patients who would benefit most from long-term albumin administration remains to be defined.



**Table 1** Plasma concentrations of cytokines, C reactive protein and irreversible oxidised albumin in healthy subject and patients with cirrhosis with and without ACLF (data gathered from Clària *et al*<sup>22</sup>)

	Healthy controls	Patients without ACLF	Patients with ACLF				
	n=40	n=285	n=237	P value*			
Proinflammatory cytokines							
TNF-α (pg/mL)	9 (7–12)	20 (14–27)	29 (17–41)	<0.001			
IL-6 (pg/mL)	0.3 (0.3–0.3)	21 (11–41)	39 (17–115)	<0.001			
IL-8 (pg/mL)	1.6 (0.6–3.3)	37 (20–76)	84 (41–169)	<0.001			
GM-CSF (pg/mL)	2.1 (1.8–11)	23 (11–50)	32 (14–83)	<0.001			
Anti-inflammatory cytokines							
IL-10 (pg/mL)	1.1 (0.4–1.1)	3.4 (1.1–9.2)	8.1 (2.1–29.9)	<0.001			
IL-1ra (pg/mL)	7 (3–9)	10 (5–22)	23 (9–63)	<0.001			
C reactive protein and irreversible albumin oxidised albumin							
CRP	<3	18 (6–35)	27 (12–20)				
HNA2 (% of total albumin)	1.3 (0.3–1.9)	4.5 (2.5–8.8)	9.8 (5.6–14.8)	<0.001			

Data are expressed as median (IQR).

\*P value between ACLF and no ACLF.

HNA2, irreversibly oxidised human nonmercaptalbumin.ACLF, acute-on-chronic liver failure; CRP, C reactive protein; GM-CSF, granulocyte macrophage colonystimulating factor; IL, interleukin; TNF-α, tumour necrosis factor alpha.

Casulleras M et al. Cells 2020

## Albumin Trials

- In a randomized trial (ANSWER Trial) involving outpatients with ascites, weekly albumin infusions reduced the incidences of infection and kidney dysfunction and were associated with a lower probability of death than standard care.
- In contrast, there was no effect in a smaller trial in which albumin was administered less frequently than weekly.
- In patients hospitalized with decompensated cirrhosis, albumin infusions to increase the albumin level to a target of 30 g per litre or more was not more beneficial than the current standard care in the UK (ATTIRE Trial).



Caraceni P et al. Lancet 2018

Variable	Albumin Group (N=380)	Standard-Care Group (N=397)	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)†	P Value	
Composite primary end point — no. (%)	113 (29.7)	120 (30.2)	0.98 (0.71-1.33)	0.87	
Components of composite primary end point — no. (%)‡					
Incidence of new infection	79 (20.8)	71 (17.9)	1.22 (0.85-1.75)		
Incidence of kidney dysfunction	40 (10.5)	57 (14.4)	0.68 (0.44-1.11)		
Incidence of death	30 (7.9)	33 (8.3)	0.95 (0.56-1.59)		
Death at 28 days	53 (14.0)	62 (15.6)	0.86 (0.57-1.30)		
Death at 3 mo	92 (24.2)	93 (23.4)	1.05 (0.74-1.48)		
Death at 6 mo	132 (34.7)	119 (30.0)	1.27 (0.93–1.73)		
Total median albumin infused per patient (IQR) — g	200 (140-280)	20 (0-120)	143 (127–158)∬		

\* Unless stated, the time of the end point is during the trial treatment period (15 days after randomization). † Odds ratios are adjusted for stratification variables, with sites as random intercept terms. ‡ The end points are defined in the original trial protocol.<sup>26</sup>

 ${\ensuremath{\int}}$  This is the adjusted mean difference between the groups.

#### China L et al. NEJM 2021



#### **MICROB-PREDICT - MICROBiome-based** biomarkers to **PREDICT** decompensation of cirrhosis and treatment response

Better stratification of cirrhotic patients enabling microbiome-based intelligent treatment

**Chief Investigator - Jonel Trebicka** 





This project hast received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825694.





#### **MICROB-PREDICT** will investigate the human microbiome to:

- 1) Identify predictors and mechanisms associated with the development of decompensation and progression to ACLF and death.
- 2) This will result in better stratification of cirrhotic patients enabling microbiome-based intelligent and personalized allocation to treatment, and ultimately prevent ACLF reducing mortality.
- 3) The identified microbiome-based markers will be validated in a clinical trial and translated into three new clinical tests useful for patients.





## Two interventions and their interaction with the gut microbiome





MICROB-Predict Infographic: Biomarkers of response to Albumin and Rifaximin



This project hast received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 825694.

#### **Approach and cohorts**



#### Data and samples:

- 12 microbiome initiatives in the field of hepatology including >10,000 patients and controls
- Existing metadata and omics data from >2500 patients and >7000 controls
- Multiomics analysis of 1050 patients

Reference,	Owner	cohort	in MICROB-PREDICT	Status	n	Vts.	Ctrls.	Data	Samples	in WP
<b>REDICT</b> (EU) Owners: JNIDEB	MUCOS/ (including m	A-PREDICT ucosa biopies)	D: Decompensated cirrhosis and ACLE wide range of	Existing data and samples.	100		- 100	- clinics, biochemics - drugs - G	stool blood BC saliva urine GI biopsy	WP2-5
	STOOL (only stor	PREDICT	biological samples, R: discovery and validation of signatures	Existing data and samples.	100	2-3			stool	WP2-5
	VALIDATIO (for valid	ON-PREDICT ation WP5)		Existing data and samples.	400					WP5
GAL/ Galcoholic liv GUTYY GUTYY GUTY GUTY GUTY GUTY GUTY GU	GA (alcoholic)	LAXY liver fibrosis)	D: alcoholic fibrosis and cirrhosis, decompensated cirrhosis with TIPS, wide range of biological samples, longitudinal data with minimum 1 visit, sub-cohort with rifaximin RCT, follow-up up to 8 years	Existing data.	400	1	150	- Clinics, biochemics - MG, MT, 16S, F, V - Sal. 16S	-	WP4
	TIPS-MIC (decompens	ROB-LIVER ated cirrhosis)		Existing data.	100	1	150		-	WP4
	IS-GALAXY ated cirrhosis)	- R: discovery and validation of signatures	Planned study in MICROB-PREDICT	100	1	-	- METAB, BA, C, G	stool	WP2, 4, 5	
EMBL-cohort (EU) Owner: EMBL RIFSYS-RCT (EU) Owner: KCL			D: individuals (no cirrhosis) from large well phenotyped and genotyped cohorts R: controls for in silico validation	S Existing data.	-	-	6000	<ul> <li>Clinics, biochemics</li> <li>drugs, diet</li> <li>MG, MT</li> </ul>	-	WP4
			D: Decompensated cirrhosis receiving rifaximin in RCT R: in silico validation of signatures, controlling for different region and technique	Existing data.	38	2	18	- Clinics, biochemics - MG, Sal. MG - BA, C, G	-	WP4
FCRB-cohort (EU) Owner: FCRB			D: compensated, decompensated cirrhosis and ACLF, first MG study in ACLF R: in silico validation of signatures, controlling for different technique	Existing data.	200	1	40	- Clinics, biochemics - MG	-	WP4
DCH-NG cohort (EU) Owner: UCPH			D: Decompensated cirrhosis, their relatives, medication and medical trajectory, R: validation of signatures, controlling for family and environmental effects	Planned study in     MICROB-PREDICT	100	1	100	- Clinics, biochemics - drugs	stool	WP5
<b>META-HIT (EU</b> Owners: UCPI	<b>J)</b> H, EMBL, INRA		D: individuals (no cirrhosis) from large well phenotyped and genotyped cohorts R: controls for in silico validation	Published data (see Section 5.1)	-		780	- Clinics, biochemics - MG, G	-	WP4
VA-US-cohort (USA)			D: compensated and decompensated cirrhosis, longitudinal up to 7 visits, wide range of biological samples R: in silico validation of signatures, controlling for different region and techniques	Published data (see Section 5.1)	315	3	38	- Clinics, biochemics - 16S, F, Sal. 16S - METAB, C, G	-	WP4
CANONIC (EU),			D: Decompensated cirrhosis and ACLF, 10 countries in Europe, longitudinal data, first description of ACLF R: in silico validation of signatures	Published data (see Section 5.1)	800	2	40	- Clinics, biochemics - METAB, G, C	-	WP4
QIN-cohort (China)			D: compensated cirrhosis, first MG study in cirrhosis R: in silico validation of signatures, controlling for different region and techniques	Published data (see Section 5.1)	123	1	114	- Clinics, biochemics - MG	-	WP4
ALBUMIN-PILOT-RCT (EU)			D: decompensated cirrhosis receiving albumin in a RCT, longitudinal data with minimum 3 visits, R: discovery of albumin response signature	Ethics approval ongoing, study starts 2018 and ends 2019	50	3	-	- Clinics, biochemics - drugs	stool	WP2,4,5
LIVERHOPE-I	RCT (EU)		D: Decompensated cirrhosis receiving rifaximin and statins in RCT R: validation of signatures for Rifaximin response	Ethics approval ongoing, study starts on 2018 and ends 2020	200	1	-	- Clinics, biochemics - drugs	stool	WP5
Total					3.026		7.380			
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#### **Our vision**



## THANK YOU

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