

Synergizing Epidemiologic Research on Rare Cancers

Liver Cancer Working Group

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What are the advances in research in this area?

- Hepatitis B vaccine (1980's)
- Hepatitis C virus ID'd (1989) decreasing rate of new infections

What are the highest research priorities in this area?

- Why has the risk increased in Western (US) populations?
- Energy Balance/Metabolic Syndrome
- Pesticides and other environmental factors
- Genetic/molecular epidemiology of the disease
- Progression studies – start with virally infected patients

What scientific gaps need to be addressed?

- Gender differences and risk
- Early detection biomarkers need to be developed
- Natural history of disease (from viral infection to development of HCC)

Research Obstacles and Challenges:

What are the main obstacles in research in this area?

- Difficult to do case control studies
- Ability to get samples from existing cohort studies
- If they are serum samples, have to be stored correctly
- Collaboration between intramural and extramural can be difficult (funding, guidelines)
- Rapid ascertainment

Research Obstacles and Challenges:

What are the main obstacles in research in this area? Cont.

- Asymptomatic until late stage
- Prognosis extremely poor
- Interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary research would be ideal
- Not many epidemiologists work in this area
- HCV status not determined prior to 1992

Research Obstacles and Challenges:

How can we overcome such obstacles?

- Assemble an interdisciplinary team
- Collaboration with existing cohorts that have information on liver cancer (intramural and/or extramural)
- Encourage new investigators to study this field

Collaborations:

What type of collaborations are most fitting for this area?

- Collaboration with cohorts that have at least 50 liver cancer cases
- Early Detection Research Network (EDRN) biomarker resource
- Studies of Energy Balance and Cancer in Humans Program Announcement
- Whole genome wide scans

Collaborations:

How do we facilitate research collaborations in this area?

- Identify interested investigators for working group
- NCI EGRP can help with guidance once working group is formed

Next Steps:

What do you see as the next steps to foster research in this area (i.e. by NCI, investigators, advocacy groups, etc.)?

- Form a working group to discuss potential research interests
- Write an article identifying why liver cancer research is under-investigated
- Look at existing cohorts (ones in EGRP portfolio, PLCO, etc.)
- Reach out to advocacy groups
- New RFA for rare diseases will be discussed tomorrow