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## Liver Cirrhosis: What To Know

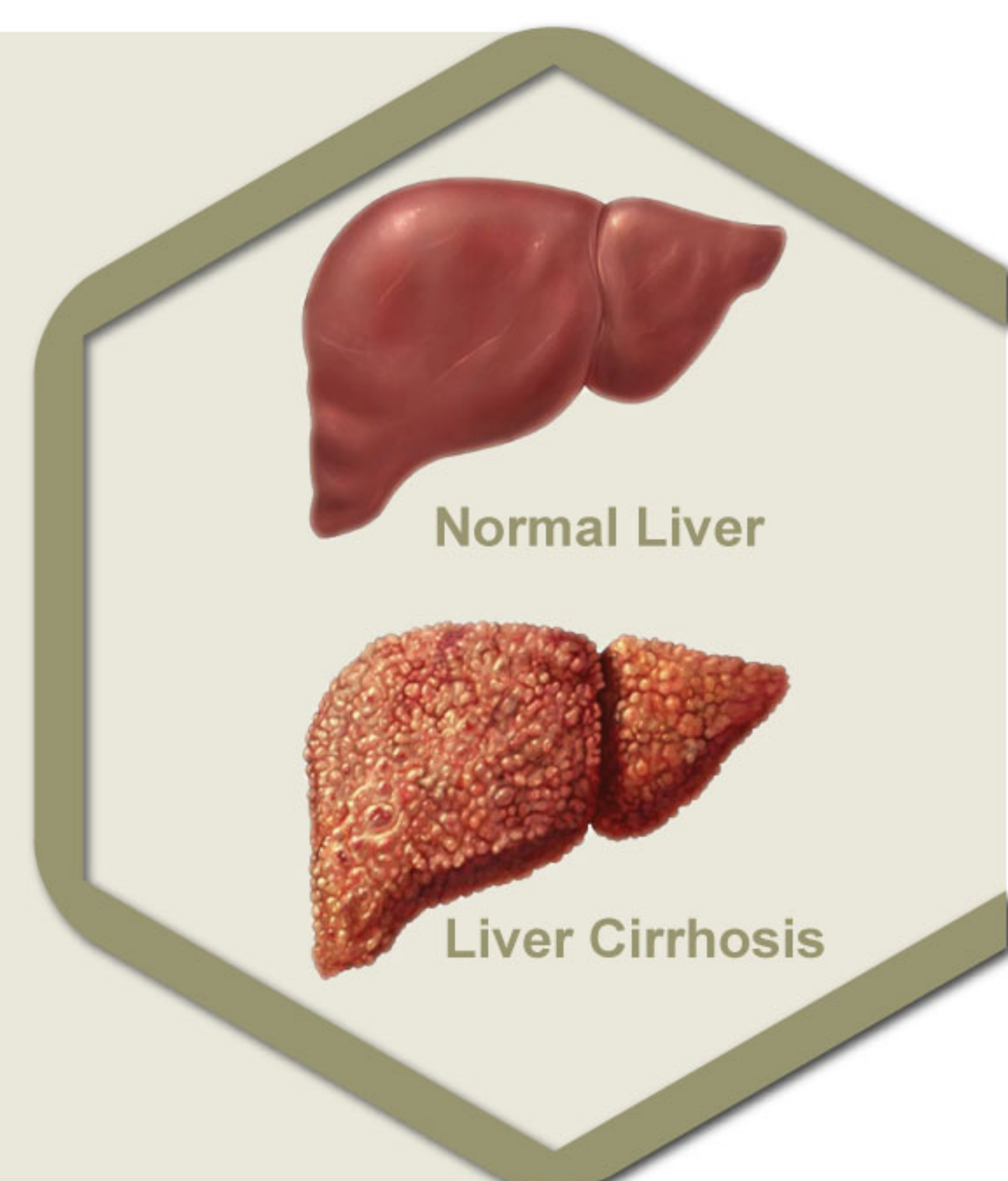
Dr Kieron Lim Boon Leng, Senior Consultant in Gastroenterology and Hepatology, practising at Mount Elizabeth Hospital, Singapore shares about the trends in liver disorder and the latest advancements in hepatology. He was Head of the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, National University Hospital (NUH), and Medical Director for liver transplantation at the National University Centre for Organ Transplantation.

### LIVER DISORDERS: TRENDS

Over the last 5 to 10 years, the most striking trend in liver disease is the decline in hepatitis C. This is largely attributed to the potent and effective antiviral medications which became available in 2010. This has drastically reduced the incidence of hepatitis C around the world. In tandem when hepatitis C falls, the incidence of fatty liver disease is steadily climbing. This is a trend can be seen globally, both in Western as well as in Asian countries.

### LIVER CIRRHOSIS

Liver cirrhosis is the end stage of liver disease and this is characterized by a significant scar tissue or fibrosis occurring in the liver. There are many causes of liver cirrhosis. The three most common causes include viral hepatitis (hepatitis B and C), alcohol, and fatty liver disease.



### LIVER CIRRHOSIS: COMPLICATIONS

The complications of liver cirrhosis include (1) jaundice (yellow discolouration of the eyes and skin), (2) ascites (accumulation of fluid in the abdominal cavity), (3) internal bleeding from varices (dilated blood vessels found in the esophagus and stomach), and hepatic encephalopathy (altered mental status). Hepatic encephalopathy has spectrum of manifestations, ranging from poor concentration, mild sleep disturbance, to deep coma. This occurs because the liver is not able to excrete toxins from the body efficiently, resulting in a build-up of ammonia in the blood. Another feared is the development of primary liver cancer or hepatocellular carcinoma.

When these complications arise, the patient should be urgently referred for consideration and evaluation for a liver transplant.

### LIVER CARE: LOOKING AHEAD

There is extensive research and numerous ongoing clinical trials being carried out to find a safe and effective drug to reverse the inflammation and scarring due to fatty liver disease. Hopefully in the near future, we will have medications that are as effective as the hepatitis C medications, to reverse and cure patients with fatty liver disease.

## LIVER TRANSPLANT PROGRAMME AT MOUNT ELIZABETH MEDICAL CENTRE

This multidisciplinary program, comprising of experienced specialists, will provide patient-centred care for the transplant recipient and the donor. The core group of specialists includes liver surgeons, hepatologists, an intensive care specialist, infectious diseases

specialists, as well as a team of specialized nurses and allied health professionals. Typically, liver donors are next of kin and family members of the patient. However, when certain conditions are not met and potential family members are not suitable for donating their livers,

individuals with a very strong emotional relationship may be able to donate, for example, childhood friends and close colleagues can be considered. This unique feature in Singapore allows an emotionally related donor to donate half their liver to the patient.