

# **Liver Transplantation for Hepatocellular Carcinoma**

*An Essay*

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# List of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgement .....	I
List of abbreviations.....	II
List of tables .....	IV
List of figures .....	5
Introduction .....	1
Aim of the work .....	5
Review of Literature:	
I. Anatomy of the liver .....	6
II. Pathology of hepatocellular carcinoma .....	27
III. Diagnosis of hepatocellular carcinoma .....	37
IV. Indications and contraindications of liver transplantation .....	56
V. Procedures of liver transplantation.....	69
VI. Postoperative care and outcomes.....	96
Summary and conclusion .....	128
References.....	132
Arabic summary	

## List of Tables

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: Initial clinical manifestation of HCC as related to low and high incidence population .....	41
Table 2: Clinically useful prognostic scores for selection of chronic liver disease candidates for liver transplantation .....	62
Table 3: Diagnosis and management of early postoperative complications .....	99
Table 4: Causes of death after liver transplantation beyond year-1 in Europe .....	107
Table 5: Common complications in long-term survivors of liver transplantation .....	109

# List of Figures

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1: Diaphragmatic aspect of the liver illustrating features of the anterior and superior surfaces .....	6
Figure 2: Porta hepatis and features of the visceral surface of the liver .....	7
Figure 3: Anterior view of the liver .....	8
Figure 4: Hepatic "true" lobar and segmental divisions .....	9
Figure 5: Liver segmental anatomy .....	10
Figure 6: The surfaces and external features of the liver .....	12
Figure 7: Surfaces of the liver and their relations .....	14
Figure 8: Inferior surface of the liver and their relations .....	16
Figure 9: Exploded diagrammatic sketch of the liver .....	18
Figure 10: The four most common variations of the hepatic arterial system .....	19
Figure 11: Diagram to show the intrahepatic distribution of the hepatic artery .....	21
Figure 12: Diagram of the intrahepatic distribution of the hepatic veins .....	23
Figure 13: Hepatocellular carcinoma (arrow) arising in a cirrhotic liver .....	31
Figure 14: Hepatocellular carcinoma histopathology .....	34
Figure 15: Fibrolamellar hepatocellular carcinoma .....	36
Figure 16: Encapsulated HCC in a 53-year-old man with hepatitis B .....	42
Figure 17: Color Doppler US image shows a linear intratumoral vessel .....	43
Figure 18: HCC with late washout in an 85-year-old man with hepatitis C .....	44
Figure 19: A 47-year-old man with hepatocellular carcinoma in S2 for 2nd TACE .....	47

## List of Figures (Cont.)

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 20: 70-year-old man with biopsy-proven HCC.....	48
Figure 21: Different patient examples contrasting PET, CT, and pathology findings .....	49
Figure 22: Inferior right hepatic vein greater than 5 mm .....	73
Figure 23: The IVC ligament is clamped with two small vascular clamps.....	74
Figure 24: The bifurcation of right and left portal vein is exposed and a vessel loop is placed .....	75
Figure 25: The right hepatic duct is separated with scissors 2-3mm away from the tributary of the right hepatic duct and the left hepatic duct (arrow) to prevent stenosis of the bile duct .....	76
Figure 26: The graft is completely separated leaving the right lobe attached only by the main vessels .....	78
Figure 27: The classical caval replacement involves complete excision of recipient intrahepatic vena cava en bloc with the explanted liver .....	82
Figure 28: The “piggy back” technique requires preservation of recipient vena cava and cross-clamping of the main hepatic veins .....	84
Figure 29: The cavocavoplasty is performed by joining donor and preserved recipient vena cavae via longitudinal venotomies following closure of both ends of the donor vena cava .....	85
Figure 30: The simple portal vein anastomosis is performed with a continuous suture, and it is crucial that a “growth factor” is left to allow for significant expansion at the anastomosis on reperfusion.....	87
Figure 31: (A) In cases of portal vein thrombosis with minimal SMV involvement, an anti pancreatic jump graft between SMV and donor portal vein using donor iliac vessels can be created. In cases of more extensive SMV involvement, a portocaval hemi-transposition can be performed by end-to-side,(B) or by end-to-end (C) anastomosis of recipient vena cava to donor portal vein .....	89

## List of Figures (Cont.)

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 32: In the absence of adequate inflow from the recipient celiac axis .....	90
Figure 33: In the presence of a right accessory artery an attached segment of SMA can be anastomosed to the coeliac aortic patch .....	91
Figure 34: The accessory vessel can be anastomosed to a branch of the celiac trunk.....	92
Figure 35: The left accessory artery is perfused by preserving the left gastric artery from which it arises .....	93
Figure 36: Final view shows normal anatomy .....	95
Figure 37: An approach to the management of abnormal liver tests in late survivors of liver transplantation .....	123

## List of Abbreviations

<b>18F-FDG</b>	18-Fluorine labeled 2 Deoxy 2D Glucose
<b>ACE</b>	Angiotensin converting enzyme
<b>ACR</b>	Acute cellular rejection
<b>AFP</b>	Alpha-fetoprotein
<b>AH</b>	Adenomatous hyperplasia
<b>ALT</b>	Alanine aminotransferase
<b>AST</b>	Aspartate aminotransferase
<b>AZA</b>	Azathioprine
<b>CBD</b>	Common bile duct
<b>CDR</b>	Chronic ductopenic rejection
<b>CEUS</b>	Contrast enhanced ultrasound
<b>CMV</b>	Cytomegalovirus
<b>CNI</b>	Calcineurin Inhibitor
<b>CT</b>	Computed Tomography
<b>CTAP</b>	Computed Tomography Arterial Portography
<b>CTHA</b>	Computed Tomography Hepatic Arteriography
<b>DCD</b>	Donation after cardiac death
<b>DEXA</b>	Dual energy x-ray absorptiometry
<b>FNH</b>	Focal nodular hyperplasia
<b>GDA</b>	Gastroduodenal artery
<b>GGPT</b>	Gamma glutamyl transpeptidase
<b>GIT</b>	Gastrointestinal tract
<b>GRWR</b>	Graft-to-recipient body weight ratio
<b>HBV</b>	Hepatitis B virus
<b>HCC</b>	Hepatocellular carcinoma



<b>HCV</b>	Hepatitis C virus
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## **List of Abbreviations** (Cont.)

<b>ICU</b>	Intensive care unit
<b>IgG</b>	Immunoglobulin G
<b>IMV</b>	Inferior mesenteric artery
<b>IVC</b>	Inferior vena cava
<b>LDLT</b>	Living donor liver transplantation
<b>MELD</b>	Model for end-stage liver disease
<b>MMF</b>	Mycophenolate mofetil
<b>MRCP</b>	Magnetic resonance cholangiopancreatography
<b>MRI</b>	Magnetic resonance imaging
<b>PEEP</b>	Positive endexpiratory pressure
<b>PET</b>	Positron Emission Tomography
<b>PSC</b>	Primary sclerosing cholangitis
<b>PVT</b>	Portal vein thrombosis
<b>SMA</b>	Superior mesenteric artery
<b>SRL</b>	Sirolimus
<b>TAC</b>	Tacrolimus
<b>UKELD</b>	United Kingdom model for end-stage liver disease
<b>US</b>	Ultrasound

## INTRODUCTION

**H**epatocellular carcinoma is the fifth most common cancer worldwide. It is a primary malignancy of hepatocyte, generally leading to death within 6-20 months. Hepatocellular carcinoma frequently arises in the setting of cirrhosis, appearing 20-30 years following the initial insult to the liver. However, 25% of patients have no history or risk factors for the development of cirrhosis. The extent of hepatic dysfunction limits treatment options, and as many patients die of liver failure as from tumor progression (*Dancygier, 2010*).

Although it is currently one of the most common worldwide causes of cancer death, a major impact on the incidence of hepatocellular carcinoma should be achieved through current vaccination strategies for hepatitis B virus infection, screening and treatment for hepatitis C virus infections, and from the reduction of alcoholic liver disease. However, because the latency period from hepatic damage to hepatocellular carcinoma development is very long, it may be many years until the incidence of hepatocellular carcinoma decreases as a result of these interventions (*Bassily et al., 2009*).

Median survival from time of diagnosis is generally 6 months. Length of survival depends largely on the extent of cirrhosis in the liver; cirrhotic patients have shorter survival

times and more limited therapeutic options; portal vein occlusion, which occurs commonly, portends an even shorter survival (*Befeler et al., 2004*).

Complications from hepatocellular carcinoma include hepatocellular failure, cachexia, variceal bleeding, or (rarely) tumor rupture and bleeding into the peritoneum (*Cillo et al., 2004*).

Alpha-fetoprotein is elevated in 75% of cases. The level of elevation correlates inversely with prognosis. An elevation of greater than 400ng/mL predicts for hepatocellular carcinoma with specificity greater than 95% (*Gomaa et al., 2009*).

Ultrasonography is the least expensive choice for screening, but it is highly operator-dependent. A suspicious lesion on a sonogram generally requires additional imaging studies to confirm the diagnosis and the stage of the tumor. Computed Tomography scanning has the added benefit of detecting extra-hepatic disease, especially lymph-adenopathy. Magnetic Resonance Imaging may detect smaller lesions and can also be used to determine flow in the portal vein. The overall sensitivity of Magnetic Resonance Imaging is thought to be similar to that of triphasic Computed Tomography scanning. The study of vascular and biliary anatomy of the liver can be performed in different ways as: angiography, angio-CT, magnet resonance imaging. However, in patients

with nodular cirrhotic livers, magnetic resonance imaging has been shown to have better sensitivity and specificity (**Bennett et al., 2002**).

Research into the possibility of liver transplantation started before the 1960s with the pivotal baseline work of Thomas Starzl in Chicago and Boston, where the initial liver transplantation techniques were researched in dogs. Starzl attempted the first human liver transplantation in 1963 in Denver, but a successful liver transplantation was not achieved until 1967 (**Mazzaferro et al., 2008**).

Absolute contraindications to liver transplantation by most programs include: spontaneous bacterial peritonitis or other active infection, severely advanced cardiopulmonary disease, extrahepatic malignancy that does not meet cure criteria, active alcohol or substance abuse, and inability to comply with immunosuppression protocols because of psychosocial situations (**Cormier et al., 2006**).

Medical management before transplantation is aimed at preventing and treating the complications associated with end stage liver disease. Thus, many patients take various medications to control the consequences of liver failure and portal hypertension. These complications include (but are not limited to) ascites, spontaneous bacterial peritonitis, encephalopathy, esophageal varices, and intense pruritus (**Lucey, 2004**).

Living donor liver transplantation is based on two main principles: (1) donor morbidity and mortality must be kept to a minimum; and (2) graft and recipient survival should be as high as in full size from dead donor liver transplantation. In this regard, careful evaluation and selection of the donor minimizes the risk to the donor and maximizes the benefit to the recipient (*Fan et al., 2002*).

The role of liver biopsy in donor selection remains controversial, since the procedure is associated with additional potential risks for the donor. It is believed by some that liver biopsy in donor selection for right adult Living donor liver transplantation is mandatory, once the initial donor screening and non-invasive evaluation is complete (*Martin and Benedict, 2005*).

Technical complications include haemorrhage, Hepatic artery thrombosis, Portal vein thrombosis, Biliary leaks and biliary stenosis. The outcome after liver transplantation depends on the underlying disease; the best results are seen in patients with chronic liver disease (*Georgiades et al., 2006*).

## **AIM OF THE WORK**

The purpose of this essay is to focus on liver transplantation as an option for curability in hepatocellular carcinoma.