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HEPATITIS C VIRUS AND DEATH RISK IN HEMODIALYSIS PATIENTS.

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Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is common in maintenance hemodialysis (MHD) patients. We hypothesized that HCV infection is associated with an increased all-cause and cause specific death risk in MHD patients. We analyzed survival in a 3-year (7/2001-6/2004) national cohort of

82,958 MHD patients, 13,664 of whom underwent HCV enzyme immunoassay (EIA) testing. The HCV EIA was reported positive in 1,590 MHD patients (12%). In fully adjusted survival models, HCV infection associated death hazard was 1.25 (95% confidence interval: 1.12-1.39). This death risk was more prominent among incident (vintage <6 mos) than prevalent MHD patients. Subgroup analyses showed tendency towards death risk across almost all clinical, demographic and laboratory subgroups of MHD patients

(Figure). Hence, HCV infection, as diagnosed by EIA, is associated with significantly higher mortality risk. More diligent HCV detection and treatment may improve survival in MHD patients.

