

US liver-related deaths underestimated for decades

16 August 2013



Image courtesy of Blausen Medical

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(HealthDay)—Using an updated definition of liver-related causes of death raised the count of liver mortality in the National Death Registry in 2008 approximately two-fold, according to research published in the August issue of *Gastroenterology*.

Sumeet K. Asrani, M.D., of the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Rochester, Minn., and colleagues used a revised definition of liver-related causes of death to update [mortality data](#) from the Rochester Epidemiology Project from 1999 to 2008 and from the National Death Registry from 1979 to 2008.

The researchers found that using the National Center for Health Statistics definition would have captured only 71 deaths (27.2 percent) of the 261 liver-related deaths in the Rochester Epidemiology Project database. Among cases involving viral hepatitis or hepatobiliary cancer as the cause of death, immediate cause of death was liver-related in 96.9 and 94.3 percent of cases, respectively. For 2008 data from the National Death Registry, applying the updated definition raised the count of liver mortality from 11.7 to 25.7 deaths per 100,000.

"These data support that deaths due to [viral hepatitis](#) and hepatobiliary cancers should be included in the enumeration of liver-related deaths to accurately represent the burden of [chronic liver disease](#)," the authors write.

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APA citation: US liver-related deaths underestimated for decades (2013, August 16) retrieved 9 June 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-08-liver-related-deaths-underestimated-decades.html>

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