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## UCT study identifies novel ART drug-related liver injury

A recent study by University of Cape Town academics has found that Efavirenz, a drug that forms part of many antiretroviral regimens particularly in low and middle-income countries, causes a pattern of drug-induced liver injury (DILI) that has previously not been associated with this drug.

The study found that severe Efavirenz DILI was “associated with appreciable morbidity and mortality with affected patients often healthy at the time of ART (antiretroviral) initiation with no prior AIDS-defining illness.”

The findings of this and ongoing research is of some concern given the rollout of antiretroviral treatment in South Africa.

“The findings have important implications for developing world ART programs, where millions are being commenced on efavirenz-based ART regimens as criteria for initiation are expanded,” according to the study.

The initial findings in this study, which was conducted by Professor Mark Sonderup, Dr Debbie Maughan, Dr Neliswa Gogela, Dr Masheko Setshedi, Dr Helen Wainwright, Professor Graeme Meintjes and Professor Wendy Spearman, were published so as to sensitize clinicians to the severe pattern of this DILI in patients receiving efavirenz based antiretroviral treatment.

“We observed three patterns of injury, the most severe being submassive necrosis. A high baseline CD4+ seemingly predicts risk for submassive necrosis, with female gender and younger age likely additional factors. The associated morbidity and mortality is a serious concern,” the study stated.

Although research into efavirenz-related DILI is not well documented, it is thought to occur less frequently than it does with nevirapine.

**ENDS**

**Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department**

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