Liver disease is the underlying cause for 2% of all deaths. During a decade, deaths from liver disease increased 27% and will continue rising. Liver disease deaths are often associated with stigma. Many patients have complicated social circumstances with little family or social support.

The aim of the study was to use national mortality data to understand and publicise demographic characteristics of people dying from liver disease and place of death in order to improve care.

Liver disease as underlying cause of death
Liver disease otherwise mentioned on death certificate

Figure 1: The number of deaths from liver disease

Figure 2: Average annual number of deaths with an underlying cause of liver disease, by sex

Figure 3: The percentage of deaths with an underlying cause of liver disease that occurred under the age of 75

Figure 4: Distribution by quintile of income deprivation of deaths with an underlying cause of liver disease

DISCUSSION

Death from liver disease is often associated with stigma. Many but by no means all of the people dying from liver disease come from deprived backgrounds. Those dying of alcoholic liver disease may have mental health problems or drug dependence problems which complicate their social circumstances such as they have little family or social support.

The course of advanced liver disease is complicated, with acute and sometimes near fatal exacerbations necessitating hospital admission but from which patients can make a good recovery.

LIVER DISEASE PATIENTS DIFFER FROM THE MAJORITY OF DYING PATIENTS DUE TO YOUNG AGE, DEPRIVATION AND HOSPITAL AS A PLACE OF DEATH. LIFE THREATENING, ACUTE-ON-CHRONIC EXACERBATIONS, CO-MORBIDITIES AND PSYCHOSOCIAL PROBLEMS FREQUENTLY COMPLICATE THEIR END OF LIFE CARE.

MORE FOCUS NEEDS TO BE GIVEN IN THE HOSPITAL SETTING TO RECOGNITION OF AND PREPARATION FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF DEATH IN LIVER PATIENTS AS THIS WHERE MOST WILL END THEIR LIVES.

REFERENCES

For more end of life care intelligence information see the website: www.endoflifecare-intelligence.org.uk

www.gov.uk/phe