EASL Monothematic Conference
Clinical Immunology in Viral Hepatitis
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University College London

THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE LIVER

www.easl.ch/various_meetings.htm
The cellular components of the host immune response to hepatitis B virus (HBV) and hepatitis C virus (HCV) play a critical role in controlling viral replication and in the pathogenesis of liver damage. Technological advances over the last few years have equipped investigators with powerful tools that allow detailed analysis of both phenotypic and functional characteristics of cellular immune responses in patients. Over the last years, these have been applied to large patient cohorts to study immune responses prospectively during the course of infection as well as during antiviral therapy and to determine the immunologic correlates of viral clearance or persistence, resolution of hepatitis or progression of liver damage, the impact of antiviral treatment and differences between treatment responders and non-responders.

However, a significant limitation is the substantial variation in the laboratory protocols, reagents used, controls and quantification methods. Standardisation of the immunologic assays would allow a better comparison of results from different laboratories and different subsets of patients and would facilitate the understanding of immune mechanisms in hepatitis B and hepatitis C. The need for standardisation of immunologic assays is particularly important in view of the appropriate evaluation of future, experimental immunotherapies designed to enhance or modulate cellular immune responses.

The purpose of this two-day conference is to bring together investigators with research experience in clinical immunology of HBV and HCV infection for plenary discussion, rescue evaluation and standardisation of the methodological aspects of the assays employed to study cellular immunity in patients with hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Conference Objectives:
- To review the advantages and limitations of different immunological assays currently used to study cellular immune responses in patients.
- To stimulate discussion and the sharing of experiences between the investigators.
- To update on new developments and agreement on how to optimise the assay applications.