

Siemens introduces a fast new blood test for early detection of liver damage

Liver disease is becoming a major health issue and is threatening to overtake heart disease as cause of mortality, often with no clinical presentation until significant damage has occurred.

The good news is that Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics is helping to accommodate patients suffering from liver disease, with the introduction of the Enhanced Liver Fibrosis (ELF™) test, the first automated liver fibrosis test – a leading indicator of chronic liver disease.

Doctors in primary care see many patients with obesity and hazardous drinking, all of whom could be at risk of chronic liver disease. The use of a simple blood test to accurately identify those with significant liver disease will greatly aid patient prioritisation and the appropriate targeting of interventions including weight loss, exercise, and drug therapy.

Liver fibrosis refers to the accumulation of tough, fibrous scar tissue in the liver. The formation of scar tissue (through the deposition of new collagen) is a normal bodily response to injury, but in fibrosis this healing process goes awry.

The traditional reference standard for detecting and assessing liver fibrosis has been an invasive needle biopsy of the liver. The procedure can be painful and hazardous and bleeding is caused in approximately one in 1000 cases and even death in one in 10,000 cases. This also results in a high cost to the NHS, with some patients requiring an expensive overnight stay in hospital.

This first fully automated test offers doctors a quick, reliable, minimally invasive blood test option to assess liver fibrosis with results in less than one hour. With the addition of the ELF test, Siemens is currently the only company to offer an integrated portfolio of diagnostic solutions for managing liver health, which includes routine chemistry tests, hepatitis serology tests, viral load testing, and ultrasound systems.

Chronic liver disease, resulting from alcoholic liver disease, fatty liver, or viral hepatitis, is increasingly recognised as a major cause of morbidity and mortality. Standard liver function tests do not accurately reflect the true extent of fibrotic damage or, in many cases, may detect it too late.

The discovery of the ELF markers represents a significant advance in the diagnosis of patients with liver disease," said Professor William Rosenberg from the Institute for Liver and Digestive Health at University College London. "Of particular benefit, the ELF test can help to identify patients with mild-to-moderate liver fibrosis, which is usually asymptomatic, so that clinicians are able to intervene before significant damage to the liver occurs."

Please enquire at your local GP surgery about the availability of the Siemens ELF test.

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