Liver Cancer: Prevalence, Risk Factors and Strategies for Prevention and Treatment

January 15th, 2026
12:00 PM to 1:00 PM
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2044

Patient Perspective Remarks:
Evelyn Rivera, Advocacy Ambassador from New Mexico, Liver Cancer Survivor - American Liver Foundation

Hello, I’m Evelyn Rivera, and I’m a proud multi-generational, Hispanic, New Mexican. In 1995, my daughter’s elementary school hosted a blood drive, so I decided to participate and donate. It was a short time after the blood drive that I received a letter from the blood bank stating that I tested positive for Hepatitis C and could no longer give blood. I was in shock and had no idea how I had contracted Hepatitis C, or even what it was. There was little information about Hepatitis C at that time, and I was told the treatment had very low success rates and terrible side effects, so I chose to wait, in the hopes of a better treatment option in the future. My doctor and I chose to monitor my liver enzymes every six months and undergo liver biopsies every five years. For those who may not know, a liver biopsy is when a physician removes a small piece of liver tissue to test liver function.

I continued living my life as usual with no symptoms from Hepatitis C. Fifteen years after my initial diagnosis, I opted for a liver CT scan. At the follow up visit, the gastroenterologist informed me that I had liver cancer and Stage 4 cirrhosis of my liver. Once again, I was in complete shock and despite feeling completely fine, my doctor told me I would need a lifesaving liver transplant. Unfortunately, the liver transplant center in my area had permanently closed, so I was referred to a transplant center in Colorado for evaluation and regularly traveled there for cancer treatments. The other challenge was finding a support person who could be with me for the cancer treatments and after transplant. The support person is required to be with the recipient for three to four weeks after the transplant. Fortunately, my son attended college in Colorado and was able to be my support person.

I received my first lifesaving liver transplant on July 25, 2011. Unfortunately, bile duct issues required me to undergo a second liver transplant surgery on February 26, 2015. Fortunately, the second transplant was successful, and I am deeply grateful for the care I received. I know many people like me, from a large, multi-cultural, state without a liver transplant center, do not have the ability to travel out of state for medical treatment. While awaiting my first transplant, I joined a small local organ transplant support group,-in order to promote organ donation. After my second transplant and seeing the immense gap in health equity first-hand, I decided to go back to school to earn my bachelor's degree in social work to help others navigate their own liver transplant journey. I continue to advocate for liver patients, to raise awareness of liver disease, increase access to routine testing and push for better access to liver healthcare in New Mexico and at the national level.

I feel fortunate to be able to share my story in the hopes of raising awareness and education. Thank you for listening to my story. I encourage you all to take ALF's liver cancer quiz and find out if you could be at risk and spread awareness about the risks of liver cancer.

Thank you.