

# Health-Related Quality of Life Instruments and Infections

## I. INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters provided an account of HRQoL instruments for two chronic diseases, namely, cancer and multiple sclerosis. The present chapter details use of HRQoL instruments for another chronic disease, hepatitis C virus (HCV) infections.

When assessing infections that are chronic and debilitating, HRQoL questionnaires are used in the context of clinical trials, epidemiological surveys, and in day-to-day clinical practice. A huge amount of information is available on HRQoL instruments in clinical trials of cancer but, in contrast, relatively little information exists on HRQoL data from clinical trials on immune diseases and infections.

## II. HEALTH-RELATED QUALITY OF LIFE INSTRUMENTS WITH CHRONIC HEPATITIS C VIRUS

Chronic HCV infections are typically silent (1). But signs and symptoms can occur with severe or advanced chronic HCV. In some patients, symptoms do not develop until onset of advanced cirrhosis of the liver or hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). Thus, while HRQoL instruments may not reliably reflect HCV-induced hepatitis, HRQoL data most definitely can capture the symptoms of advanced cirrhosis and liver cancer.

The standard of care for chronic HCV is ribavirin plus interferon-alpha2a or ribavirin plus interferon-alpha2b (2,3). In each case, the pegylated derivative of interferon is used. In about 60% of chronic HCV patients, this treatment with ribavirin plus IFN-alpha eradicates the virus. But IFN-alpha has the established adverse drug reactions of depression, anxiety, and irritability. These effects are separate from the disease-induced adverse events of fatigue and weakness (4). The success rate of this standard

<sup>1</sup> Bonkovsky HL, Snow KK, Malet PF, et al. Health-related quality of life in patients with chronic hepatitis C and advanced fibrosis. *J Hepatol.* 2007;46:420–431.

<sup>2</sup> Toniutto P, Fabris C, Bitetto D, Fornasiere E, Rapetti R. Updates on antiviral therapy for chronic hepatitis C. *Discov Med.* 2007;7:27–32.

<sup>3</sup> Shimakami T, Lanford RE, Lemon SM. Hepatitis C: recent successes and continuing challenges in the development of improved treatment modalities. *Curr Opin Pharmacol.* 2009;9:537–544.

<sup>4</sup> Fontana RJ, Schwartz SM, Gebremariam A, Lok AS, Moyer CA. Emotional distress during interferon-alpha-2B and ribavirin treatment of chronic hepatitis C. *Psychosomatics.* 2002;43:378–385.