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# Pre-transplant PSC treatment

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# Overview

- **itching**
- **cholangitis**
- **weight loss**

# Itching

- probably caused by accumulation of bile acids in the skin
- no single treatment is uniformly effective for all patients

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# Itching

- generally worse at bedtime
- drives others (spouses) crazy
- tends to come and go (over months)

# Itching – simple treatments

- **keep skin moist (esp. in Denver)**
  - Neutrogeena (best, expensive)
- **avoid narcotic pain pills**
- **topical (put directly on skin)**
  - hydrocortisone cream
  - Sarna
  - citrus body lotion
  - Solarcaine spray/lotion
  - oatmeal bath
  - ice pack

# Itching - treatments

- **benadryl/atarax**
  - often recommended, rarely helpful
- **rifampin**
  - Interacts with some drugs
- **ursodeoxycholic acid (urso, actigall)**
- **cholestyramine (questran)**
  - tastes bad, stomach upset

# Itching - treatments

- **marinol**
  - active component of “pot,” marijuana
- **ativan, valium**
  - only for short-term treatment
- **revia**
- **pheobarbital**

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# Itching - treatments

- other
  - tanning booth, phototherapy
  - hemodialysis with charcoal filter
  - ??

# Cholangitis

- infection in bile tree
- cause: stone/sludge blocking bile tree
- symptoms
  - varies patient-to-patient, learn your symptoms
  - jaundice, abdominal pain, dark urine, fever
  - can lead to life-threatening infection
  - recurrent = weight loss, muscle loss

# Cholangitis - treatment

- prevention
  - ERCP in selected patients
  - take actigall or urso (800-1000 mg/d)
  - for recurrent episodes
    - continuous low-dose antibiotic
    - 1 – 3 pills per week
    - selected patients change antibiotic to prevent emergence of “resistant” bacteria

# Cholangitis - treatment

- **treatment of episode of infection**
  - ERCP in selected patients
  - take antibiotics by mouth or IV 7 – 14 d
  - treat as early as possible

# Weight loss

- caused by liver failure, recurrent infections
- $\geq 10$  % body weight
- occurs at very end-stage of PSC
- leads to loss of muscle, energy, quality-of-life

# Weight loss - treatment

- **testosterone cream**
  - Testim, Androgel
  - apply directly to skin daily
  - goals: weight gain, increased energy
  - side-effects: ankle swelling
  - expensive (\$6 per day)
  - not always covered by insurance

# Observations

- most PSC patients are stable for years
- then hit “the wall”
  - recurrent symptoms, hospitalizations
  - loss of muscle, weight, energy
  - time for transplant (if possible)
    - deceased-donor from ICU
    - living donor
    - die waiting for transplant
    - other center
      - 3 centers with faster transplant rate

# Observations

- **alternative/nutritional therapies**
  - 1) **more frequent for conditions poorly treated by conventional rx**
  - 2) **I do acupuncture, open-minded**
  - 3) **most are ineffective**
  - 4) **MD's are ignorant about the effects of nutrition (eat well)**

# Observations

- **cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer)**
- **affects about 10 % of PSC patients**
- **no viable way to screen**
- **frequently (usually) fatal**
  - **Walter Payton**
  - **Chris LeDoux**