

MEDIA RELEASE



world diabetes day
14 November

New Liver Screen Initiative for Patients with Diabetes

Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) is a growing and silent epidemic in Ireland, with an increasing number of diabetes and obese patients being diagnosed each day.

Awareness among patients and healthcare providers in this country is extremely low and it is hoped this unique collaboration, to coincide with World Diabetes Day, will highlight the serious risk NAFLD poses for diabetes patients.

“After assessing more than 400 patients with Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD), we discovered that 1 out of 4 patients had advanced fibrosis or cirrhosis. In addition, 1 out of 3 of these patients had type 2 diabetes. We need to raise awareness among the diabetes community”

Professor Suzanne Norris, Consultant Hepatologist,
St James’s Hospital and Liver Wellness®

There is a misconception among the public, healthcare and media sector that cirrhosis of the Liver “*is only associated with alcohol abuse*”, resulting in a certain “stigma” attached to the disease. This could not be further from the truth and it is critically important that this misconception is highlighted for the benefit of all people with Type 2 diabetes and/or obese individuals in Ireland.

The fact is, NAFLD is a common condition that affects up to 25% of the adult population, is particularly common in Type 2 diabetes patients and has become the most common cause of chronic liver disease in developed countries.

Diabetes Liver Screen Initiative

Professor Suzanne Norris and the Liver Wellness® Team are pleased to be working with Diabetes Ireland to promote awareness of Non-Alcohol Fatty Liver Disease (NAFLD) among its members.

To coincide with World Diabetes Day, Prof Norris will present on the topic of NAFLD at the Diabetes Ireland AGM on the 12th November. NAFLD screening will be carried out using the innovative FibroScan technology, a 10-minute/non-invasive/pain-free FibroScan® test. These screens will be provided free throughout the day of the Diabetes Ireland AGM and during the week of World Diabetes Day at Liver Wellness Clinics in Dublin. Diabetes Ireland members interested in availing of a free FibroScan assessment can provide their details to Liver Wellness at the Diabetes Ireland AGM or can email fibroscan@liverwellness.ie to apply for a free screen (50 free FibroScan assessments in total will be provided).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

NAFLD – A disease associated with diabetes and the obesity epidemic

As the name suggests, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), is different to liver disease caused by excessive alcohol intake. NAFLD is common in people with type 2 diabetes, high BMIs and/or having a high intake of fat and sugar, commonly referred to as the 'Western diet'.

It has become the most common liver disease in western countries and is the number one cause of cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma in the Western world. It is estimated that Ireland is set to become Europe's most overweight nation by 2025, according to a recent report by the scientific Journal. It is estimated that 36% of the Irish population aged over 50, are classified as obese, and a further 43% are overweight which implies that the prevalence of NAFLD in Ireland is likely to increase significantly in the years to come.

Health risks associated with obesity such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and type II diabetes are well known, but awareness of the impact on liver health is under the radar.

NAFLD - FACTS

Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease is defined as an excess of fat on the liver in the absence of increased alcohol intake. There are several factors that increase the risk of developing Fatty Liver and these include diabetes (type 2), high blood pressure, high cholesterol and being over-weight or obese. Approximately, 20% of patients diagnosed with Fatty Liver will develop fat-related inflammation of the liver, called Non-Alcoholic Steato-Hepatitis (NASH). NASH can lead to liver damage and scarring (fibrosis) and if untreated over time, can lead to cirrhosis of the liver.

What is of concern is that NAFLD often displays no symptoms and routine liver blood tests (LFTs) do not differentiate NAFLD from NASH or accurately stage fibrosis (liver scarring).

International Clinical Practice Guidelines recommend that for type 2 diabetes patients, the presence of NAFLD should be screened irrespective of liver enzyme blood tests, since type 2 diabetes patients are at high risk of liver disease progression. The FibroScan liver assessment has been recommended as a validated non-invasive procedure for the identification of patients at risk of NAFLD (in some cases, a liver biopsy may be required).

NAFLD can be prevented and/or reversed through healthy eating, exercise and weight reduction.

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