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Researchers to develop test for Severe Alcoholic Hepatitis

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In a recent study led by researchers at the New Delhi-based Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS), a biomarker in human urine has been identified that may help develop a simple test to let clinicians predict response to treatment prior to starting therapy for patients of Severe Alcoholic Hepatitis (SAH).

SAH progresses fast and results in death in 60 percent of cases. Unlike Hepatitis B and C which are treatable with drugs, therapeutic options for SAH patients are limited. Corticosteroid therapy is available but not all patients respond to it. Those who do not respond to steroid therapy have high risk of infections and may die within three months.

Based on their study, researchers concluded that one particular urinary metabolite - acetyl-L-carnitine – can be used as a biomarker to predict non-response.

This study is the first demonstration of the utility of urine to determine treatment responsiveness in SAH. According to the researchers, the findings could form the basis for the development of a cost-effective dipstick screening test for restricting steroid use to patients with a good likelihood of responding.