

Mortality Rate During Interferon Alfa–Ribavirin Combination Therapy of Chronic Hepatitis C

To the Editor:

It has been drawn to our attention that the numbers of deaths that have occurred during combination therapy of chronic hepatitis C were stated incorrectly in the discussion section of our article entitled “Neutropenia during combination therapy of interferon alfa and ribavirin for chronic hepatitis C.”¹ In the first sentence on page 1278 we stated, “Only 1 of the 23 deaths reported from these studies was caused by infection.” Actually, in the 3 large, multicenter studies of combination therapy with interferon alfa-2b and ribavirin that were referenced in the previous sentence,²⁻⁴ there were only 3 deaths during treatment and 3 during the follow-up period, none of which were caused by infection. The report of 23 deaths was taken from a review article⁵ on adverse events from combination therapy that included the deaths from these 3 trials as well as subsequent open-access studies that incorporated information on more than 25,000 treated patients. Thus, the mortality rate associated with combination therapy is less than 0.1% and not in the range of 1%, which was suggested by our statement. We apologize for this error and the confusion it may have caused.

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