

Public Lecture by Dr. Mario Chojkier
“Problems and Solutions for Liver Disease”
April 18, 2001 at 6:00 p.m. in the Garren Auditorium, Basic Science Building
Sponsored by the Sam & Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging, UCSD

The liver plays an important role as a filter for environmental toxins, a producer of circulating proteins, a modifier of drugs and a handler of food byproducts. Consequently, liver failure results in higher susceptibility to toxins, decreased concentration of blood proteins, inadequate nutrition, as well as possible worse side-effects and lesser efficacy of some medications.

Chronic liver damage (comparable to a skin wound) may result in either normal or excessive "wound" healing. The latter condition is known as liver cirrhosis. The following are the main problems of patients with cirrhosis:

1. Water retention (in legs and belly)
2. Confusion and sleep disorders
3. Internal bleeding

In most cases, these problems can be successfully treated with medications. However, some patients may require special procedures to control the complications of cirrhosis. If the liver failure becomes more critical, a liver transplant may be needed. Fortunately, the long-term success rate of liver transplantation is currently high since better medications are available to prevent organ rejection.