

NASH vs. NAFLD (what about ASH?): Diagnostic and Treatment Implications

Robert Gish MD, FAASLD, AGAF

Robert G Gish Consultants LLC – Principal
Hepatitis B Foundation - Medical Director

Adjunct Professor of Medicine:

University of Nevada Las Vegas

University of Nevada Reno

UCSD Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences



Disclosures

Please see www.robertgish.com

Alcohol use in USA: highest increases in women, older adults and racial/ethnic minorities

Drinking trends in the U.S.

- High-risk drinking
- Alcohol abuse or dependency

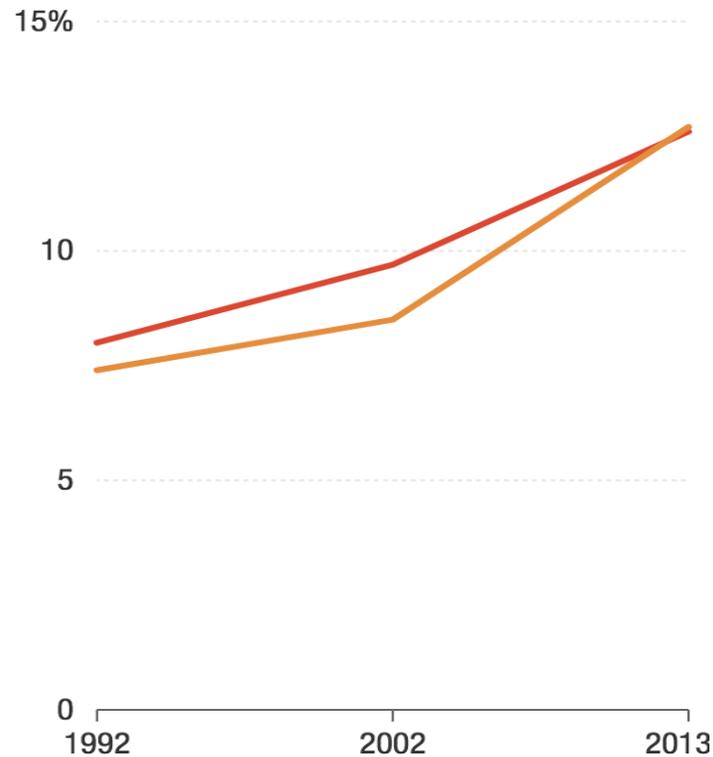
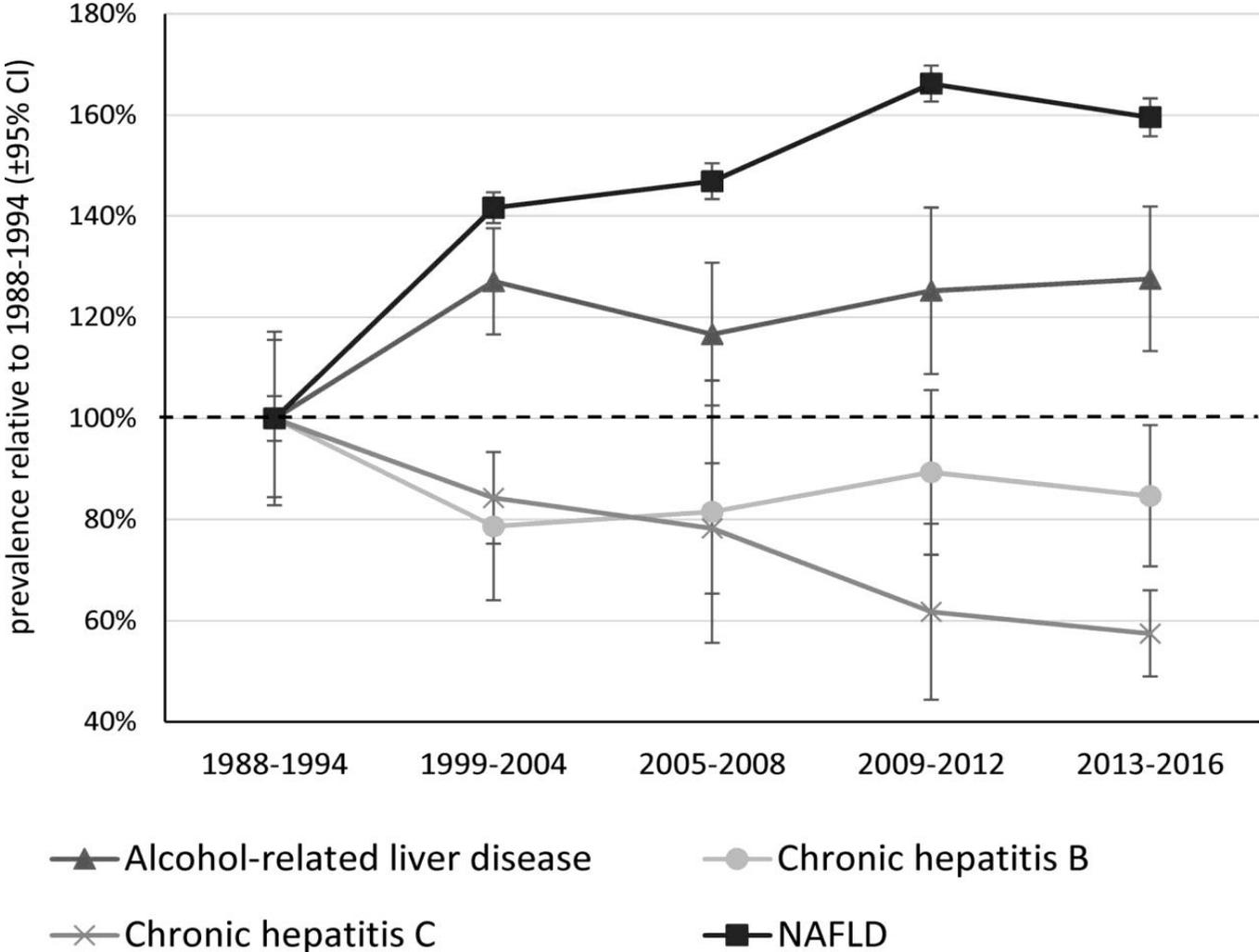


Table 1. Prevalence of and Percentage Change in 12-Month Alcohol Use by Sociodemographic Characteristics, 2001-2002 and 2012-2013

Sociodemographic Characteristic	% (95% CI)		% Change
	NESARC 2001-2002 (n = 43 093)	NESARC-III 2012-2013 (n = 36 309) ^a	
Total	65.4 (64.3-66.6)	72.7 (71.4-73.9)	11.2
Sex			
Men	71.8 (70.6-73.0)	76.7 (75.5-77.9)	6.8
Women	59.6 (58.0-61.1)	69.0 (67.5-70.5)	15.8
Race/ethnicity			
White	69.5 (68.2-70.8)	75.3 (73.7-76.9)	8.3
Black	53.2 (51.6-54.9)	66.1 (63.8-68.3)	24.2
Native American	58.2 (53.0-63.4)	73.9 (69.1-78.1)	27.0
Asian or Pacific Islander	48.4 (44.3-52.5)	62.5 (59.4-65.5)	29.1
Hispanic	59.9 (58.1-61.7)	70.2 (68.8-71.7)	17.2
Age, y			
18-29	73.1 (71.5-74.7)	80.1 (78.8-81.3)	9.6
30-44	71.9 (70.4-73.4)	79.5 (78.1-80.8)	10.6
45-64	64.3 (62.9-65.7)	71.9 (70.3-73.5)	11.8
≥65	45.1 (43.4-46.8)	55.2 (52.8-57.6)	22.4

ALD and NAFLD rates increasing compared to other risk factors for CLD



Excess Consumption of Alcohol:

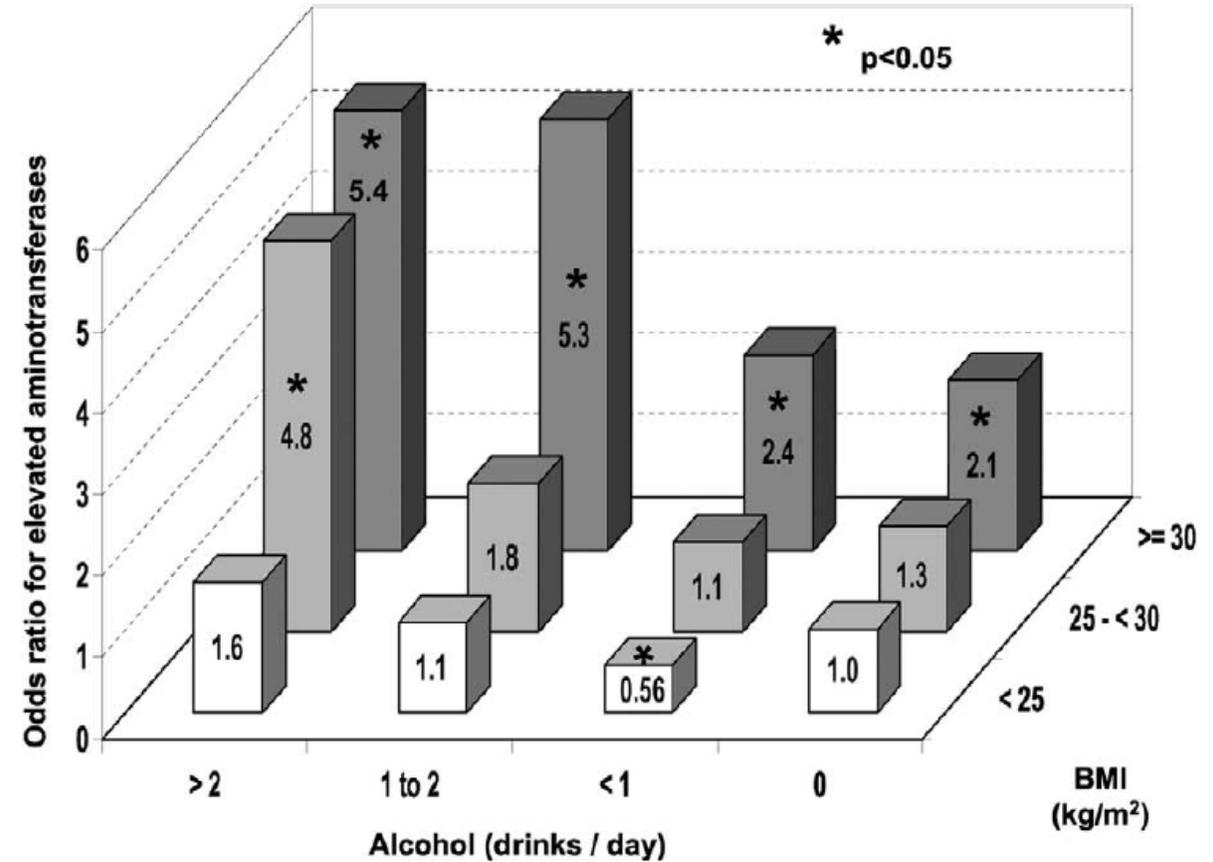
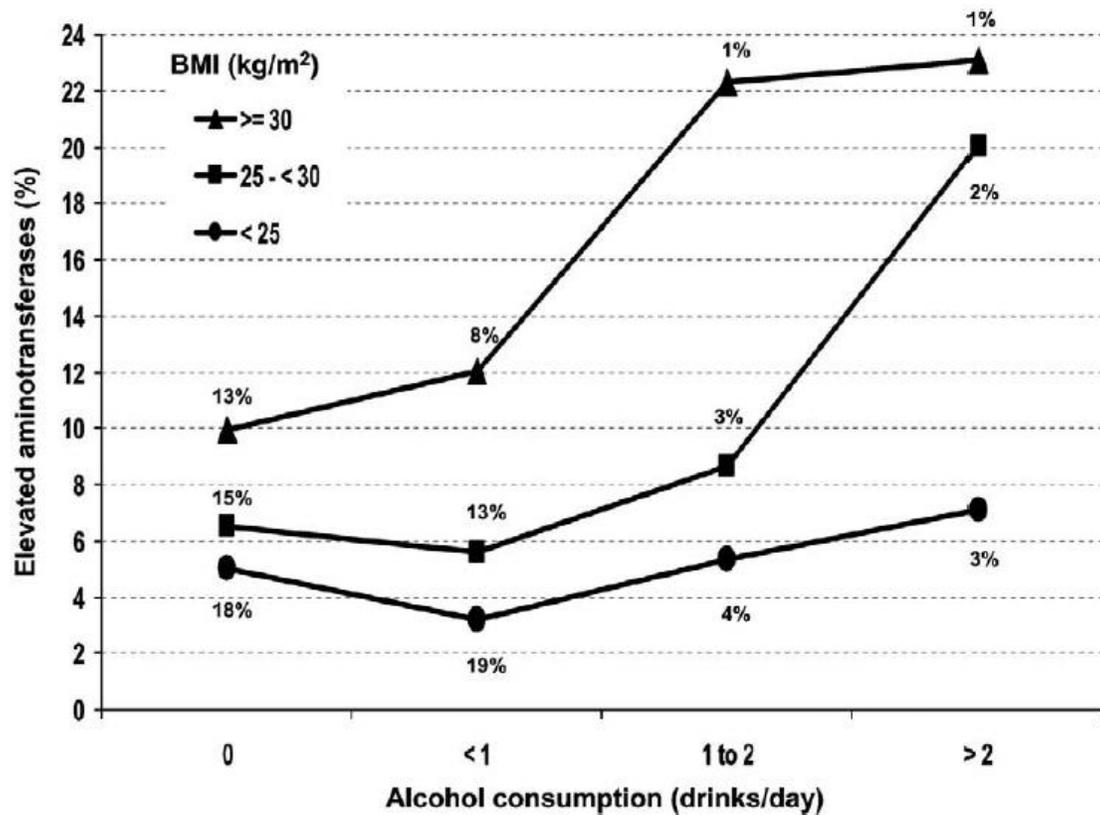
- Is the third leading preventable cause of death in the US
- Cirrhosis, accidents, domestic violence, several cancers, pancreatitis
- Disproportionately affects younger persons
- Results in 2.3 million years of potential life lost every year
- ~30 years of life lost per alcohol-associated death
- Huge non-lethal toll: marital breakdown, drunk driving, work absences

Alcoholic Liver Disease is a World Health Problem:

- 493,000 deaths in 2010
- 0.9% of all deaths
- 47.9% of all cirrhotic deaths
- ALD-associated liver cancer: 80,600 deaths

**All treatment of alcoholic liver disease
begins with abstaining from drinking**

Joint Effects of Body Weight and Alcohol on Elevated Serum ALT



Moderate Alcohol Use in Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

Beneficial effects of moderate alcohol use on cardiovascular mortality well recognised.
Cardiovascular mortality is the most common cause of death in NAFLD.

Do patients with NALFD benefit from moderate alcohol use?

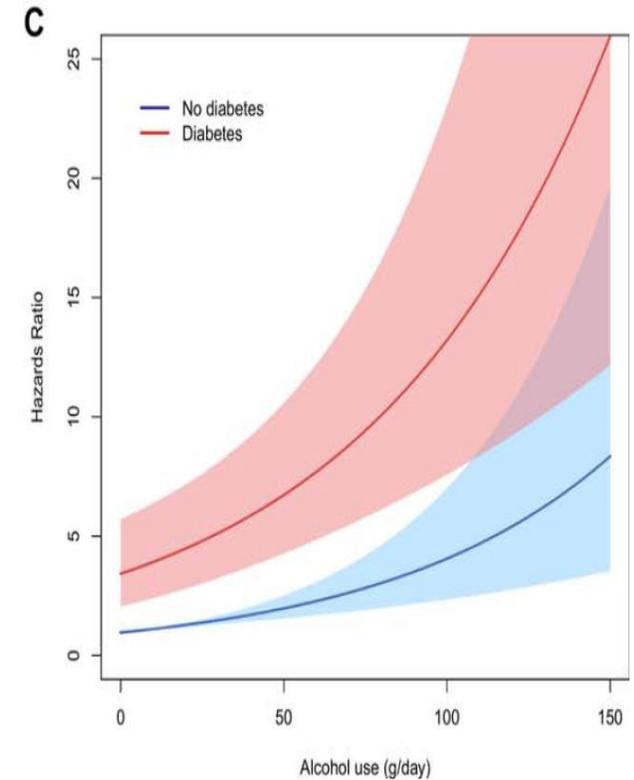
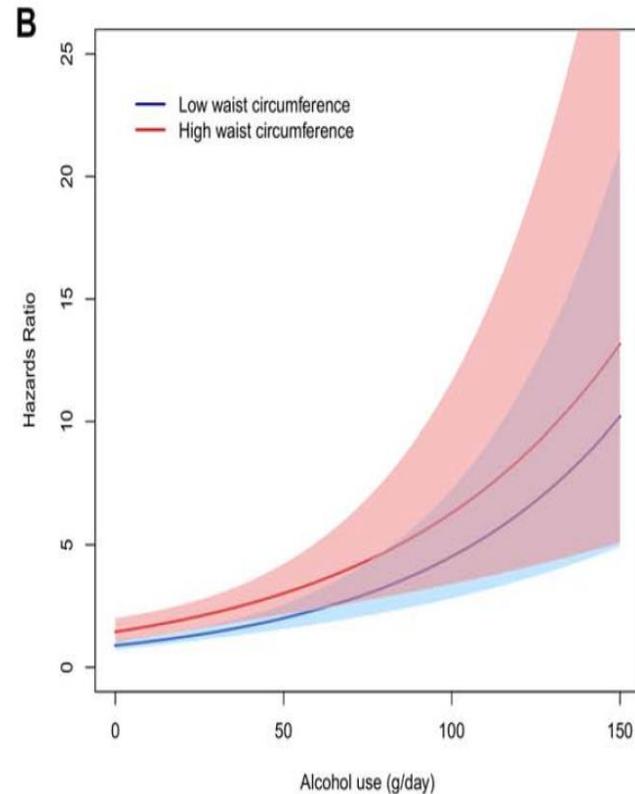
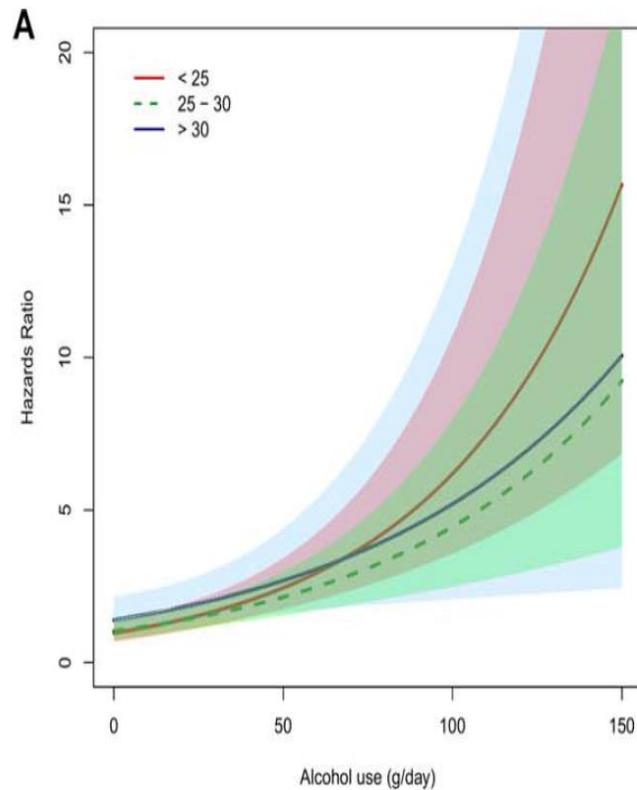
Sinn	1797:2280	Korea	Reduced risk of carotoid plaque/stenosis
Dunn	331/582	USA	Reduced NASH and fibrosis
Kwon	52/77	USA	Reduced fibrosis
Dixon	57/108	Australia	Reduced NASH
Cotrim	75/132	Brazil	Increased NASH
Ekstedt	65/71	Scandinavia	Fibrosis with heavy episodic alcohol
Ascha	58/195	USA	Increased HCC if cirrhosis

Metabolic Factors Predictive of Severe Liver Events in 6732 Finnish Patients

	HR	95% CI	P
Age (years)	1.02	1.00 - 1.04	0.04
Alcohol (g/wk)	1.002	1.001 – 1.002	<0.001
Diabetes	2.75	1.56-4.84	<0.001
HOMA-IR	1.01	1.01-1.02	<0.001
Total/LDL Chol	2.64	1.67-4.16	<0.001
Waist/BMI	3.7	1.74-7.89	0.001

Alcohol was also significant even when average alcohol intake was within limits regarded as normally defining nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.

Relationship between Alcohol use and Risk of Severe Liver Disease Stratified According to BMI, Waist circumference, Diabetes



Effect of Alcohol on Mortality in Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease

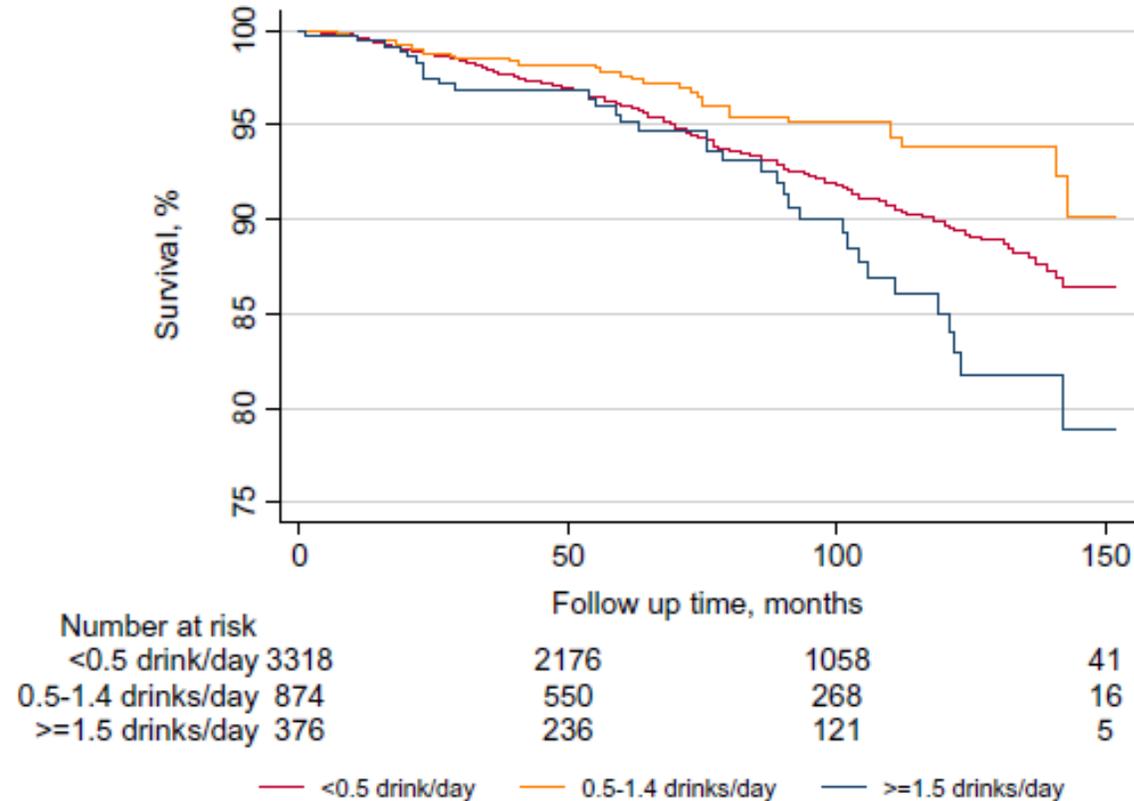
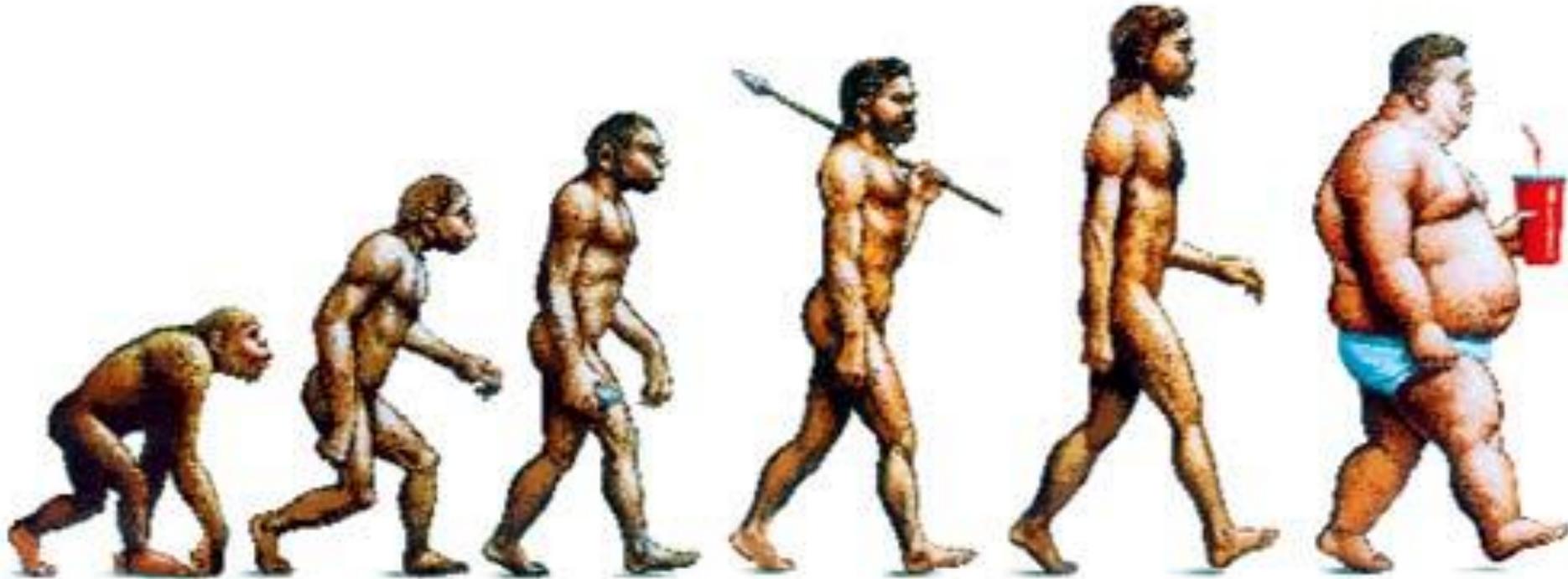
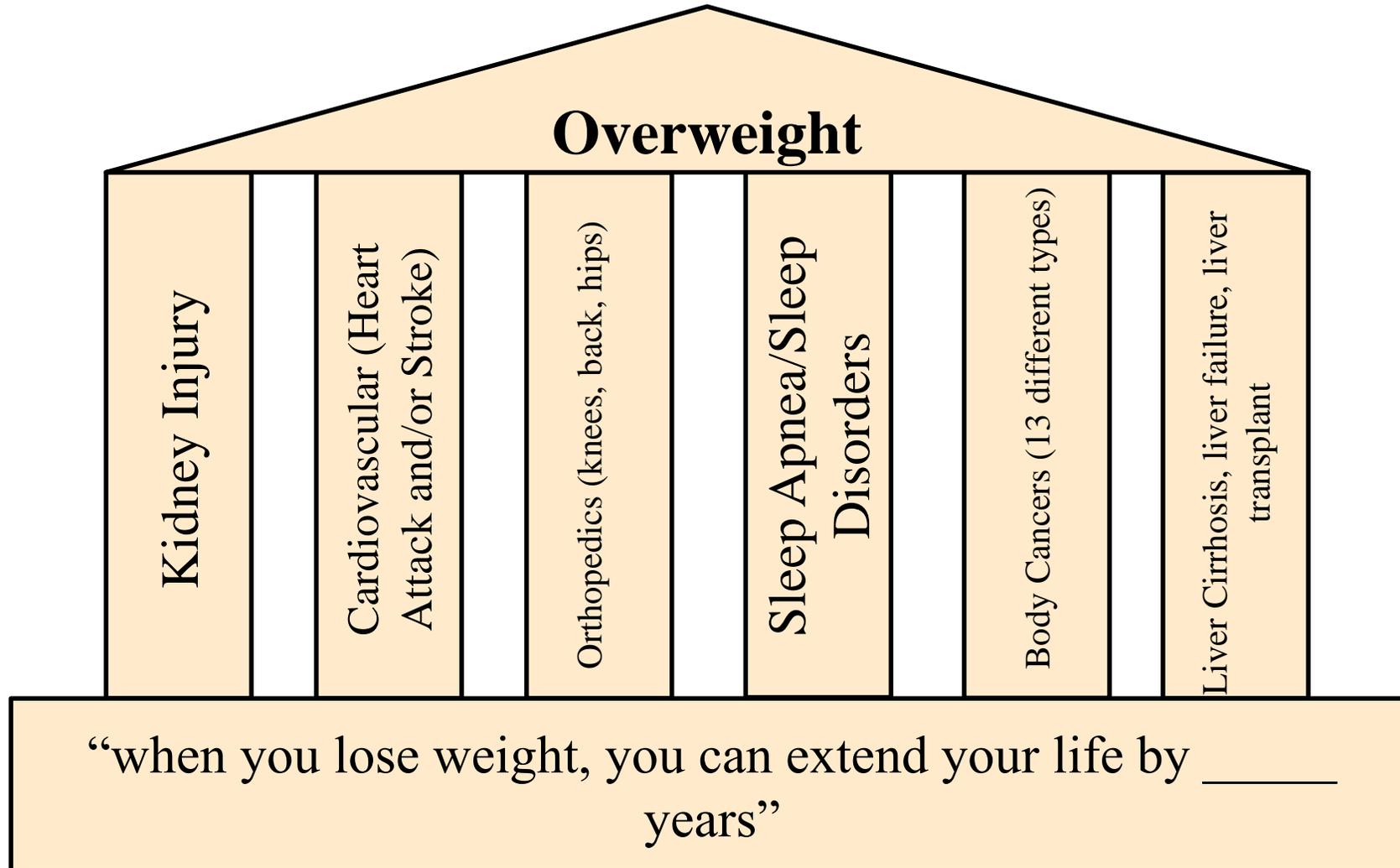


FIG. 2. Unadjusted Kaplan-Meier survival curves for effect of alcohol consumption on all-cause mortality in patients with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.

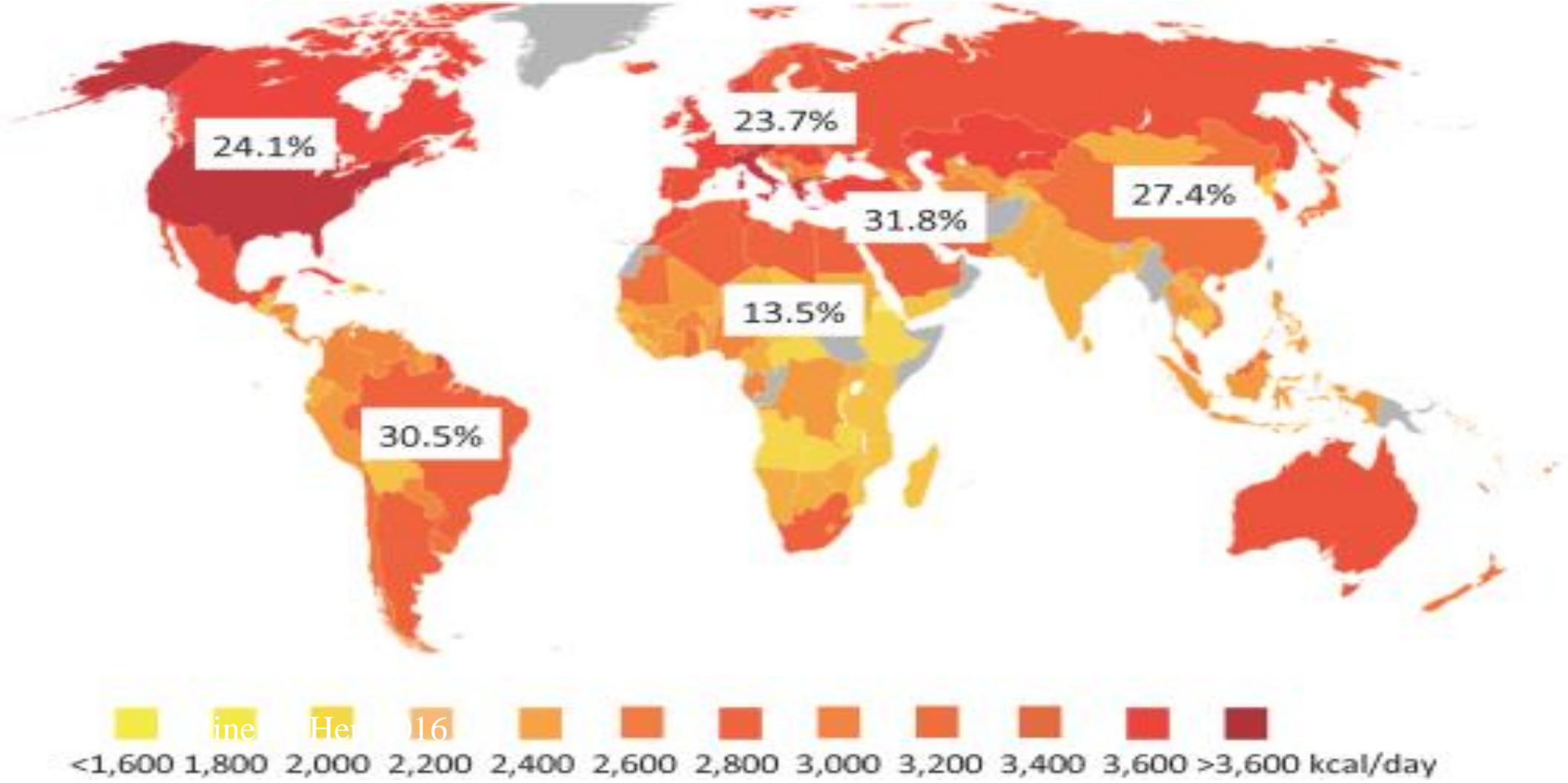
A Disturbing Evolutionary Development



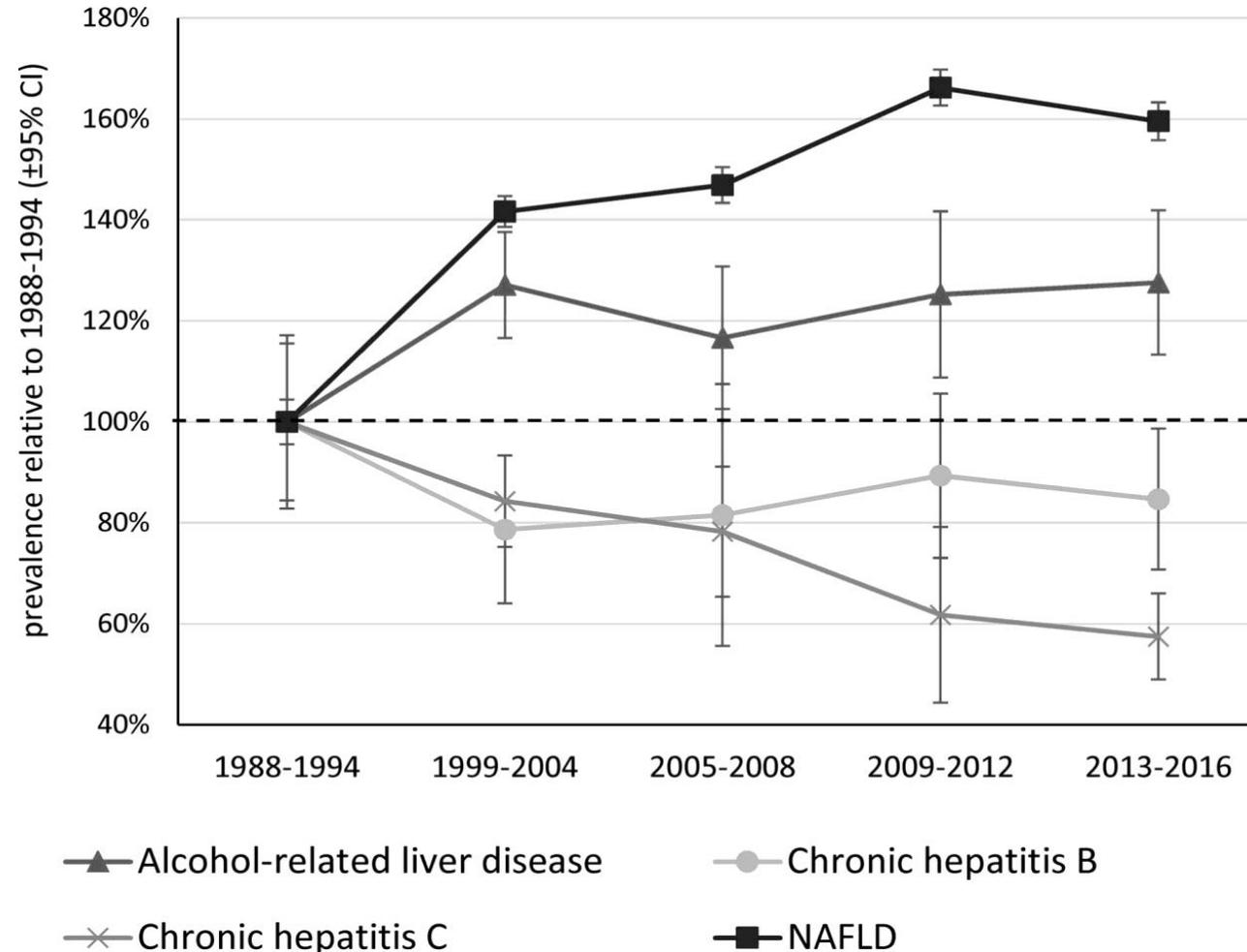
Short life span and low quality of life



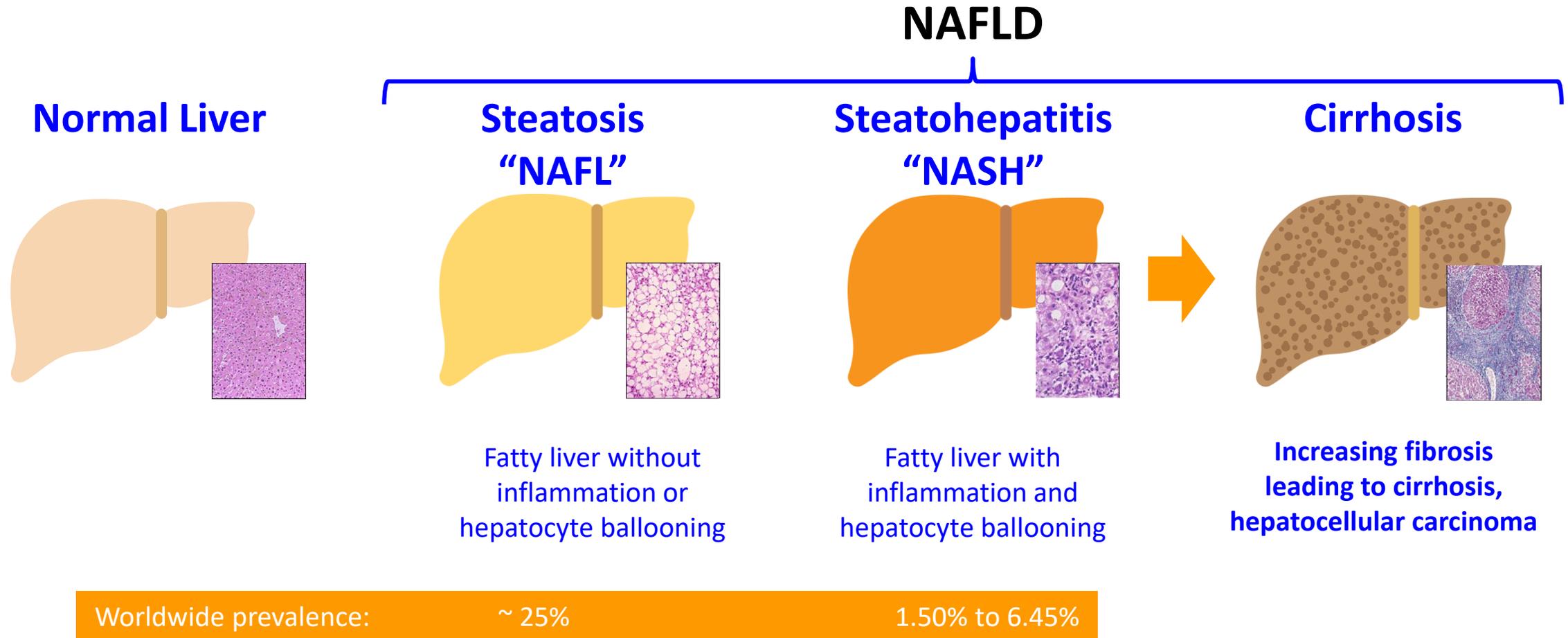
NAFLD is Seen Globally



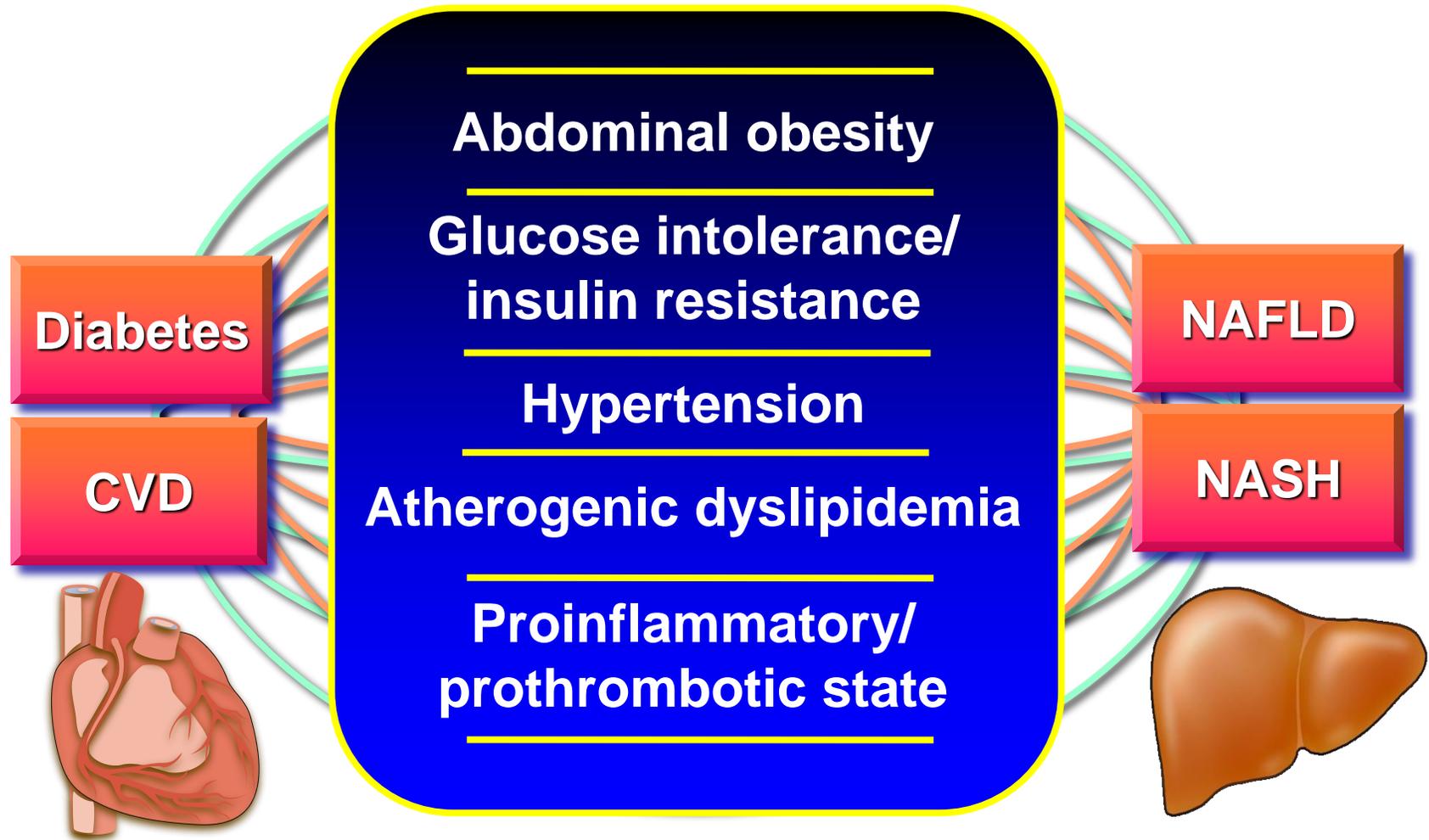
NAFLD rates increasing compared to other risk factors for CLD



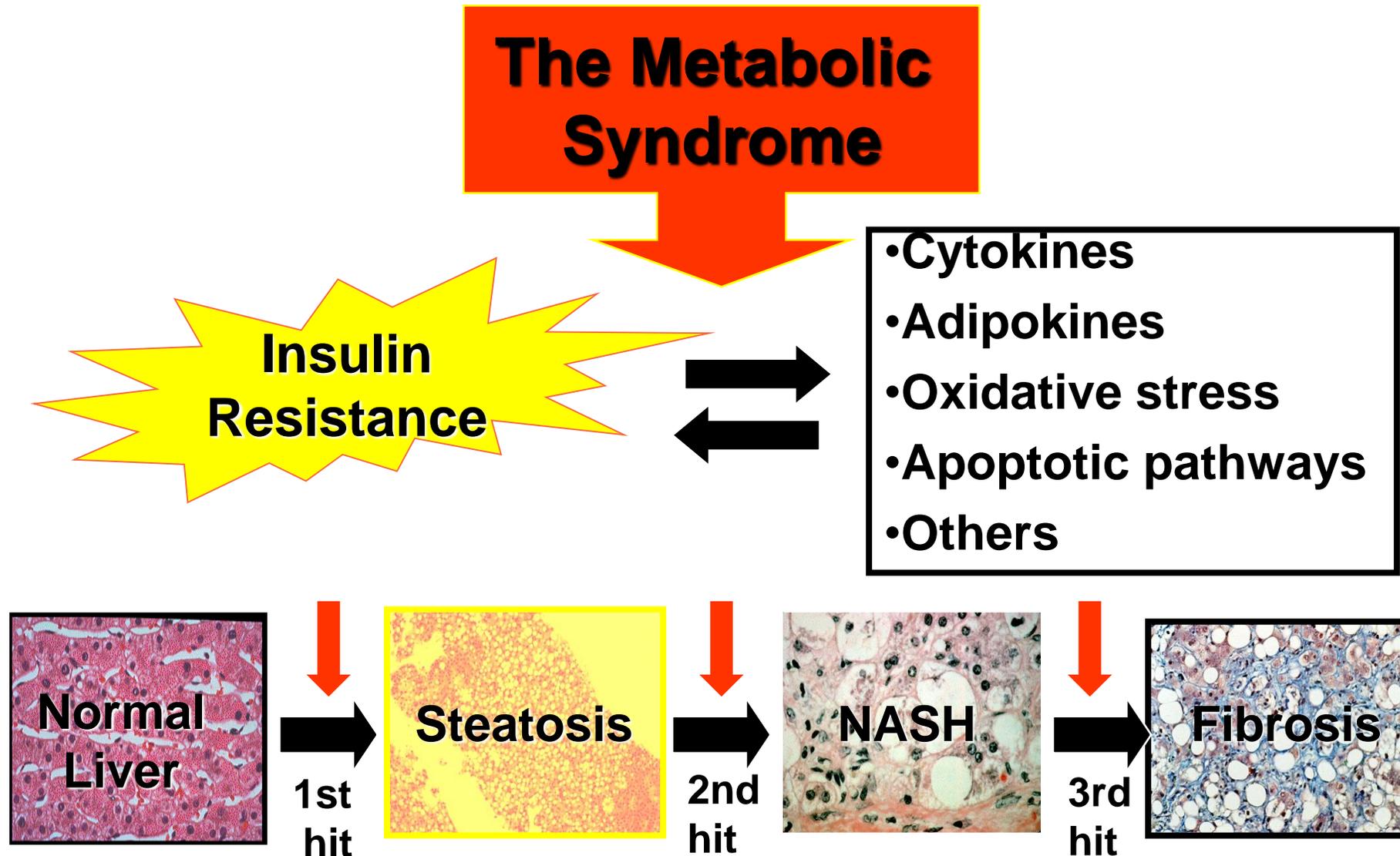
The NAFLD Continuum



Metabolic Syndrome and Its Hepatic Manifestation



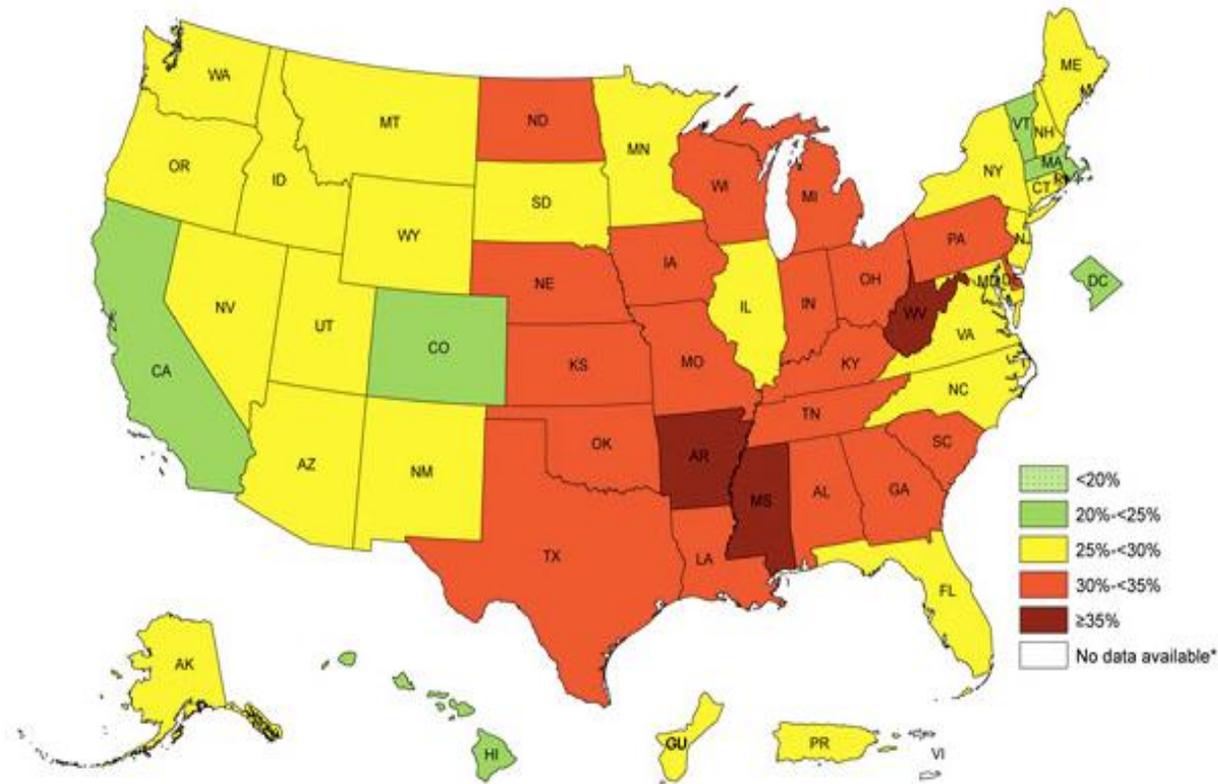
Pathogenesis of NASH : The Multi-hit Hypothesis



The Latest Epidemic

Prevalence[†] of Self-Reported Obesity Among U.S. Adults by State and Territory, BRFSS, 2014

[†]Prevalence estimates reflect BRFSS methodological changes started in 2011. These estimates should not be compared to prevalence estimates before 2011.



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, CDC.

*

Risk Factors for NAFLD

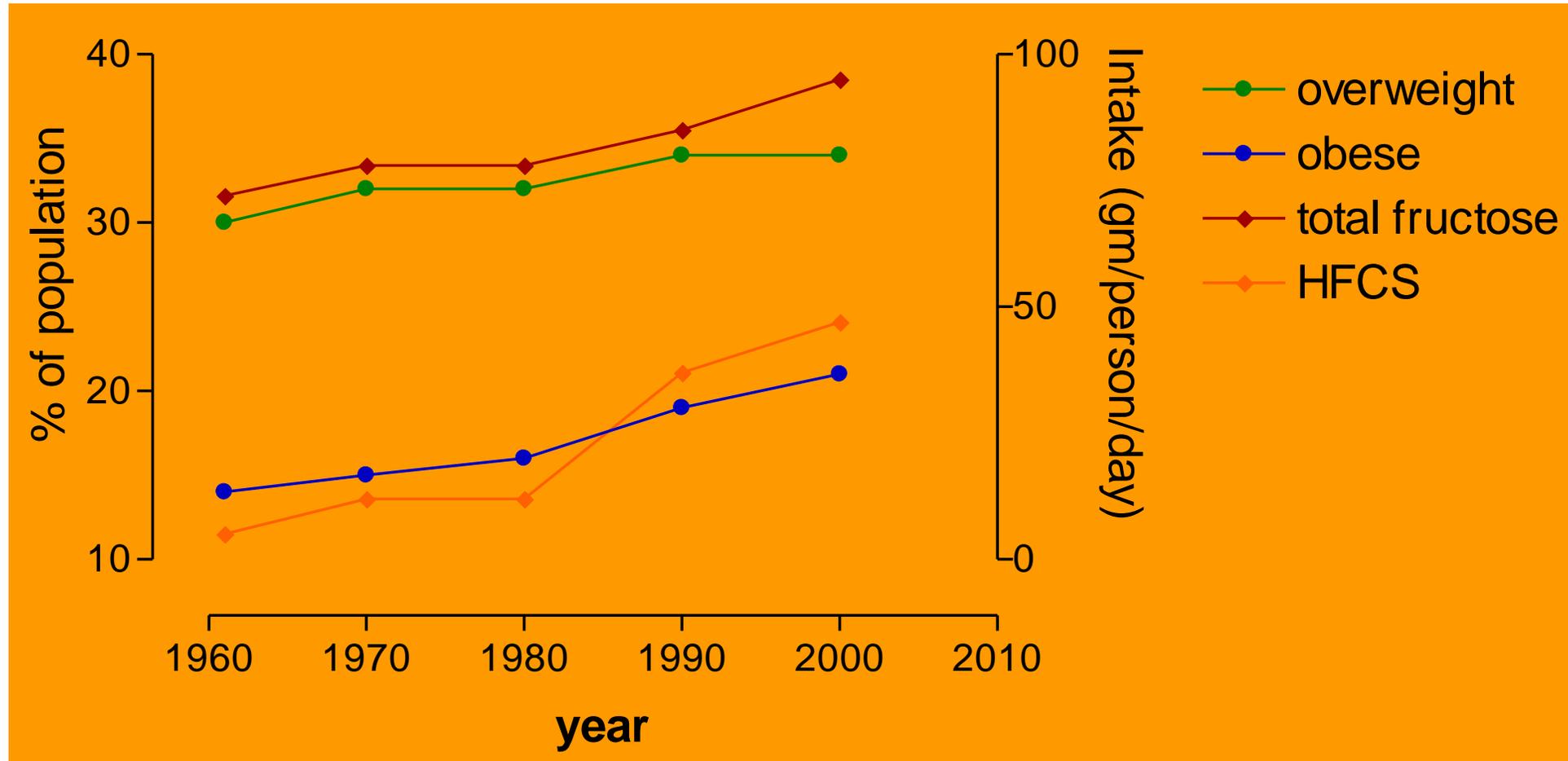
Major Co-morbidities

- Type 2 Diabetes
- Dyslipidemia
- Obesity
- Metabolic Syndrome
- HTN

Emerging Associations

- Hypothyroidism
- Sleep Apnea
- Hypopituitarism
- Polycystic Ovary Syndrome
- Increased waist circumference in Lean Nash

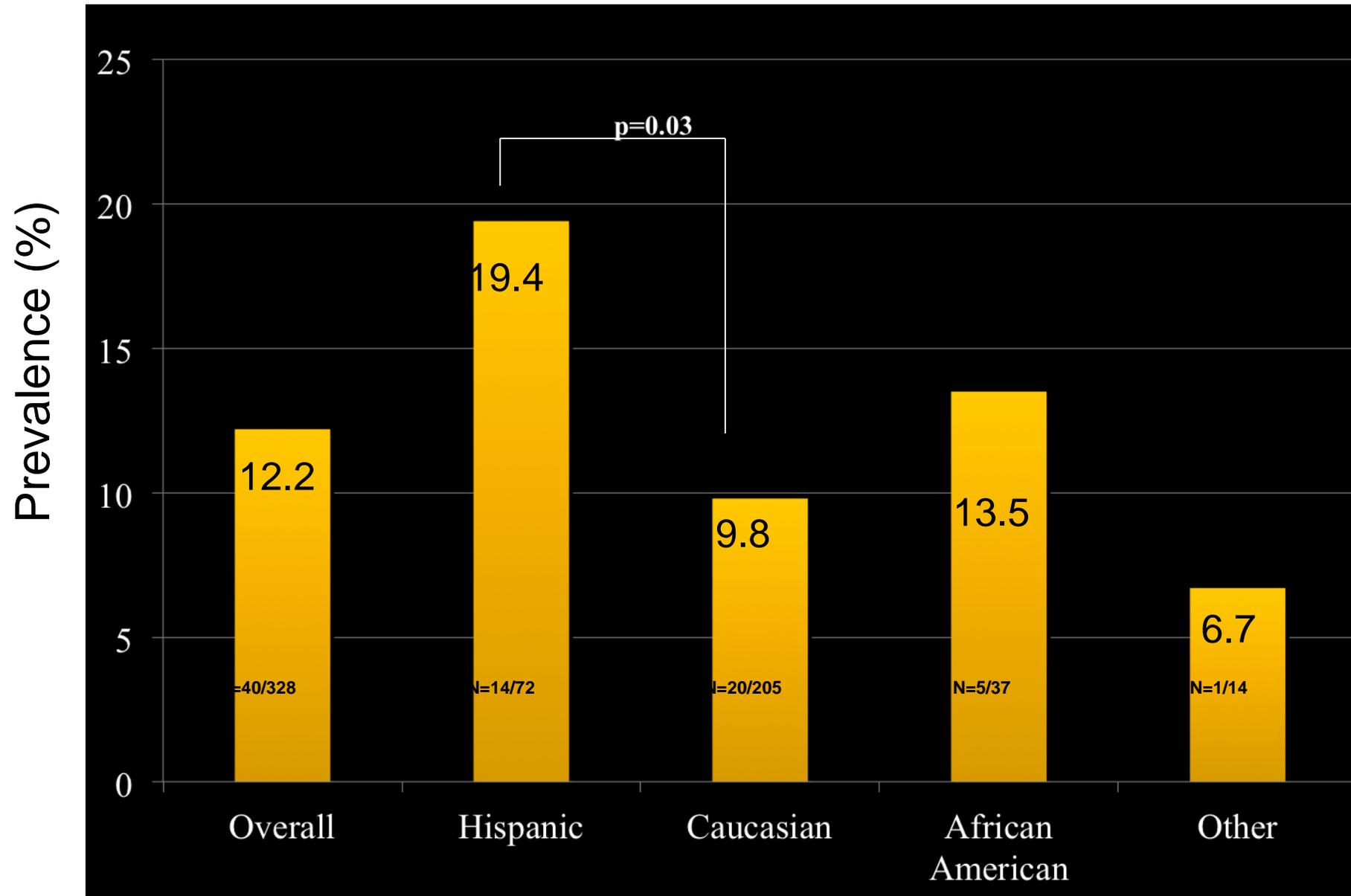
Estimated fructose intake and weight trends in the U.S.



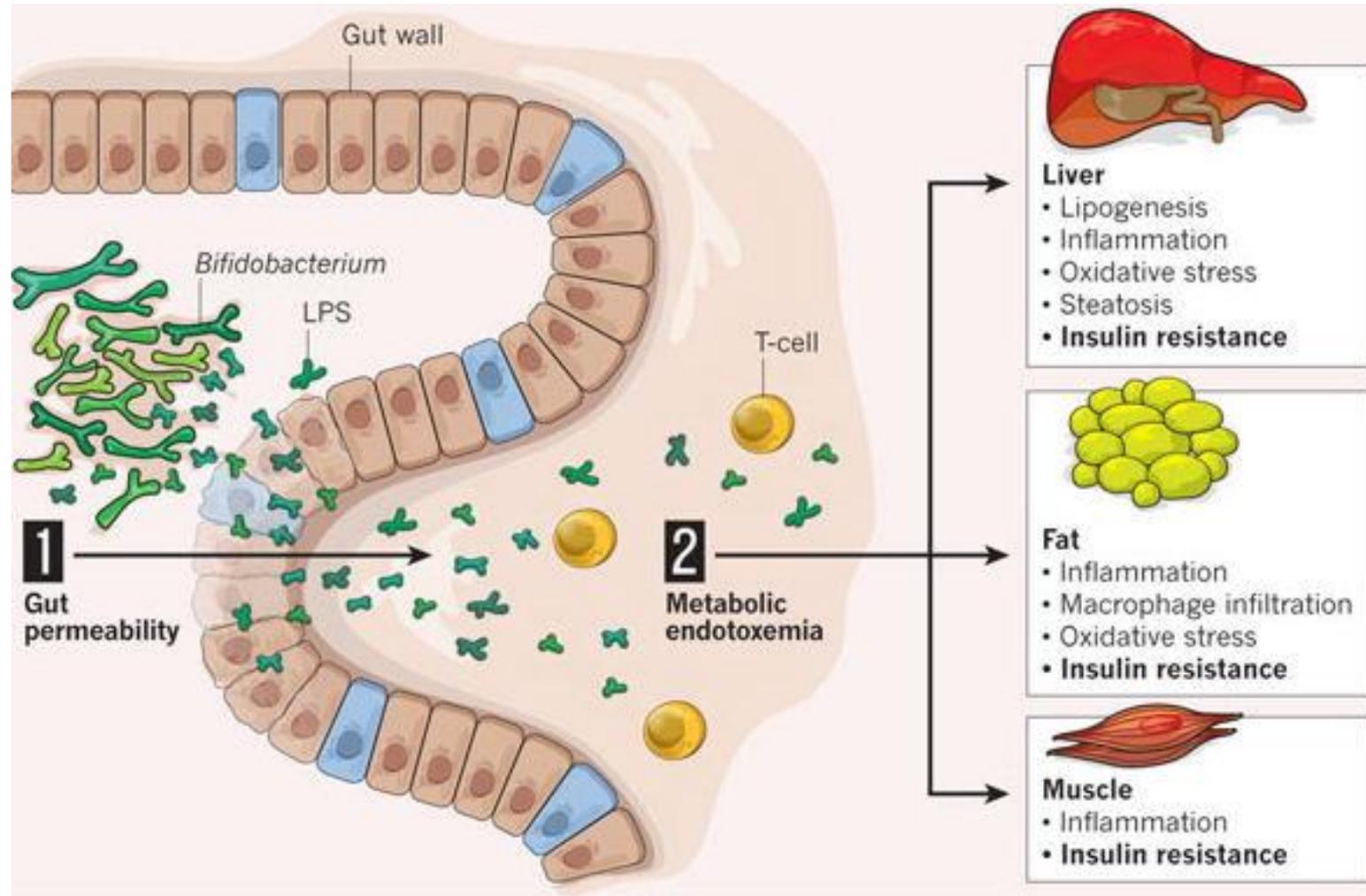
Fructose

- Dietary Carbohydrates can be converted to fat in the liver
- Fructose (alone or as part of sucrose) drives lipogenesis and promotes NAFLD
- Epidemiologic studies, clinical trials, and animal studies show that excess carbohydrate consumption contributes to NAFLD
- High fructose consumption depletes hepatic ATP and impairs recovery from ATP depletion mitochondrial toxin

NASH Prevalence Among Ethnic Groups

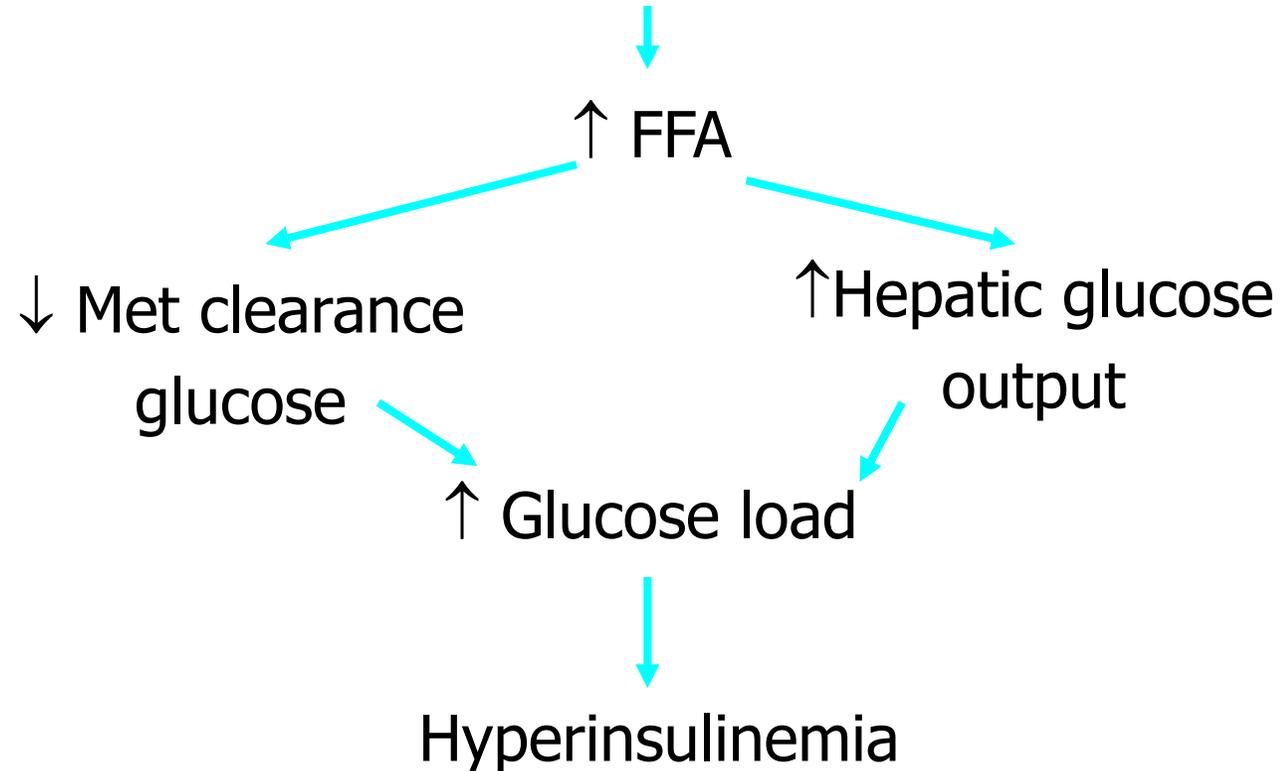


The intestinal microbiome modulates insulin resistance and metabolism

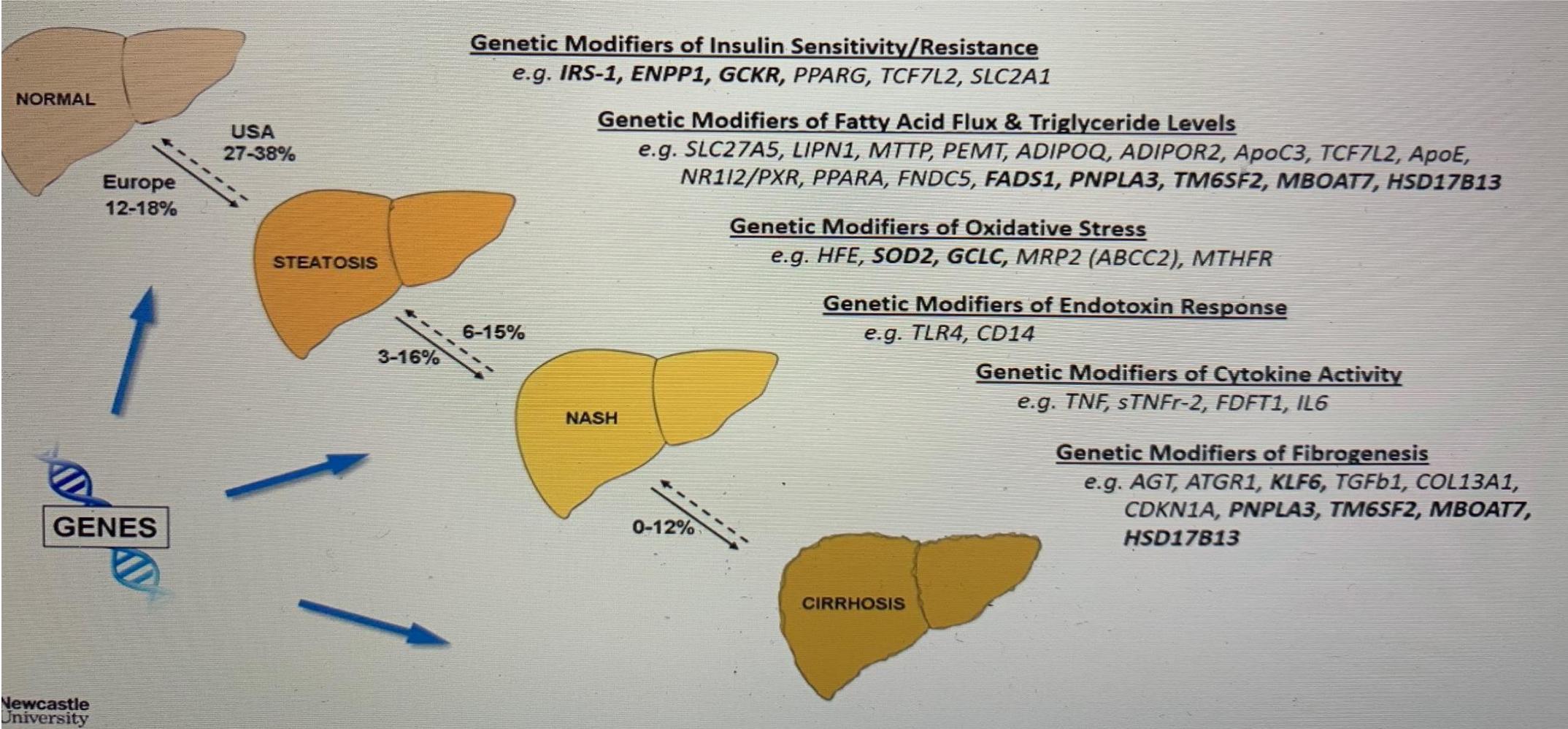


Risk Factors for NAFL-Disease (NAFLD)

Obesity, Genetics, Environment (bacteria), Diet, Activity
(Insulin sensitivity vs resistance)

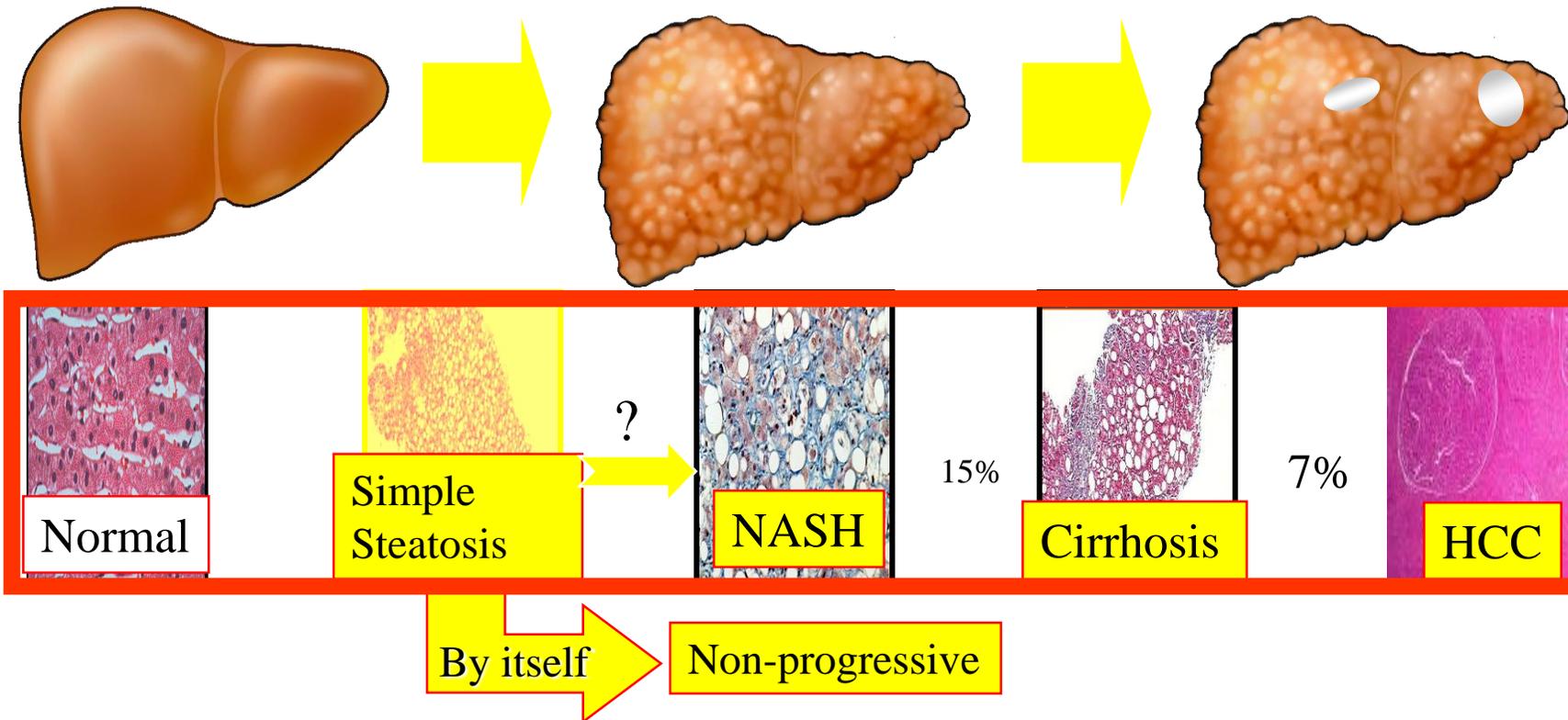


Genetic Modifiers of NAFLD Risk & Progression



Is NAFLD Progressive?

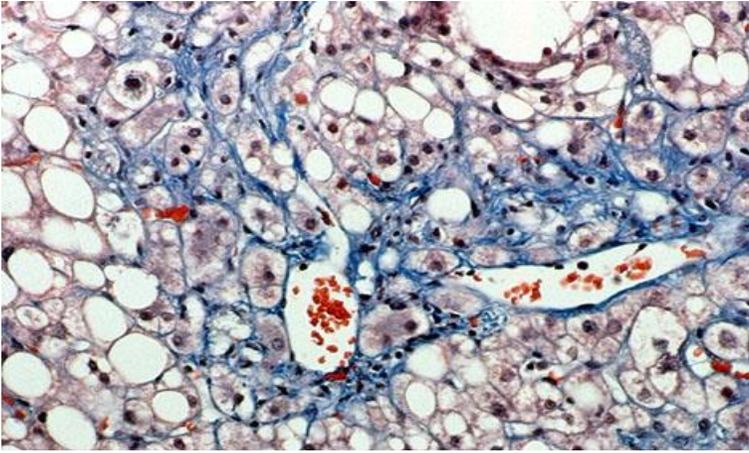
Consequences of NAFLD



Types of Fatty Liver Disease

Over 10 years

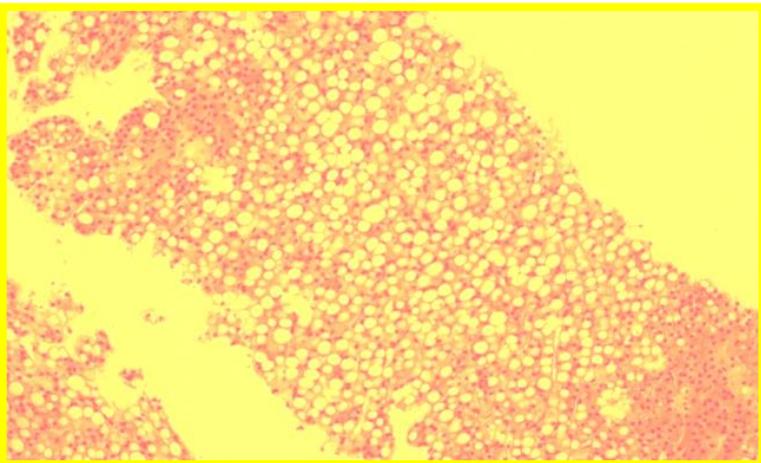
NASH



10%-20%

Cirrhosis

Steatosis alone (NAFL)



By itself

Benign

Outcomes in NAFL-D

	Surrogates	# Studies	OR [95% CI]
Overall Mortality	•NAFLD vs. General Population	8 studies	1.57 [1.18-2.10]
Incident CVD	•ALT as a surrogate	6 studies	1.10 [0.85-1.41]
	•GGT as a surrogate	10 studies	1.57 [1.42-1.74]
	•Imaging as a surrogate	7 studies	2.05 [1.81-2.31]
Incident type2 DM	•ALT as a surrogate	17 studies	1.97 [1.77-2.20]
	•GGT as a surrogate	12 studies	2.74 [2.39 – 3.14]
	•Imaging as a surrogate	3 studies	3.51 [2.28-5.41]

Liver-Related & Overall Mortality in Patients with NAFLD

	Author	n	Follow-up (mean, yrs)	Liver-related mortality	Overall mortality	Increased Mortality ^{††}
Simple Steatosis	Matteoni et al (1999)	49	9	2.0%	33.0%	No
	Ekstedt et al (2006)	58	14	0.0%	12.1%	No
	Rafiq et al (2009)	74	19*	2.7%	56.8%	No
	Soderberg et al (2010)	67	21	3.0%	34.3%	No
	Dam-Larsen et al (2009)	170	21	0.6%	28.2%	No
	Total/mean	418	17	1.7%	32.9%	
NASH	Matteoni et al (1999)	29	8	10.0%	30.0%	Yes
	Ekstedt et al (2006)	71	14	2.8%	26.8%	Yes
	Rafiq et al (2009)	57	19*	17.5%	63.2%	Yes
	Soderberg et al (2010)	51	21	5.9%	47.1%	Yes
	Evans et al (2002)	26	9	-	15.0%	Yes
	Adams et al (2005)	49	8	8.1%	35.0%	Yes
	Younossi et al (2011)	131	10*	15.7%	21.3%	NR
	Total/mean	349	11	8.6%	34.1%	
NAFLD-related cirrhosis	Hui et al (2003)	23	7	21.0%	26.0%	NR
	Sanyal et al (2006)	152	10	14.5%	19.1%	NR
	Yatsuji et al (2009)	68	5	7.3%	27.9%	NR
	Bhala et al (2011)	247	7	5.7%	13.4%	Yes
	Total/mean	490	7	12.1%	24.3%	

Clinical Features of NAFL/NASH

Symptoms:

Variable

Vague (fatigue, malaise, RUQ discomfort)

Mostly absent

Signs:

Hepatomegaly common

Splenomegaly in some

Portal hypertension unusual

Labs:

Increased AST, ALT typical

± increased Alk. Phos., GGT

Increased cholesterol, triglycerides common

Increased glucose common

Viral markers (-)

Autoantibodies (-) 

Iron studies abnormal sometimes

Imaging:

Fatty liver

Work up of patients with NAFLD

- Imaging to establish the presence of steatosis
- Meticulous alcohol and medication history
- Exclusion of co-existing or competing etiologies
- Auto-antibodies and hyperferritinemia are common
- Fasting lipid profile and measures of insulin resistance
- Liver biopsy to establish the presence of NASH

Imaging Techniques for Evaluating Hepatic Steatosis

- Ultrasound, liver, full abdomen
- Elastography
 - VCTE (Fibroscan), 2D, Point, MRE
- Computed tomography
- Magnetic resonance imaging
 - Percent fat calculations
 - Estimated protein-density fat-fraction
 - Magnetic resonance elastography
- Controlled attenuation parameter
 - For fat using FibroScan

How to establish diagnosis of NAFLD and identify patients with NASH ?

- Patients with NAFLD or NASH are generally asymptomatic
- Clinical presentations cannot distinguish NASH
- Current radiologic modalities are unable to distinguish NASH or accurately detect fibrosis
- Non-invasive biomarkers are not established (getting closer)
- Therefore, in 2017, liver biopsy remains “the imperfect gold standard” to diagnosis and stage NASH

Clinical Factors that are different between Isolated Fatty Liver and NASH

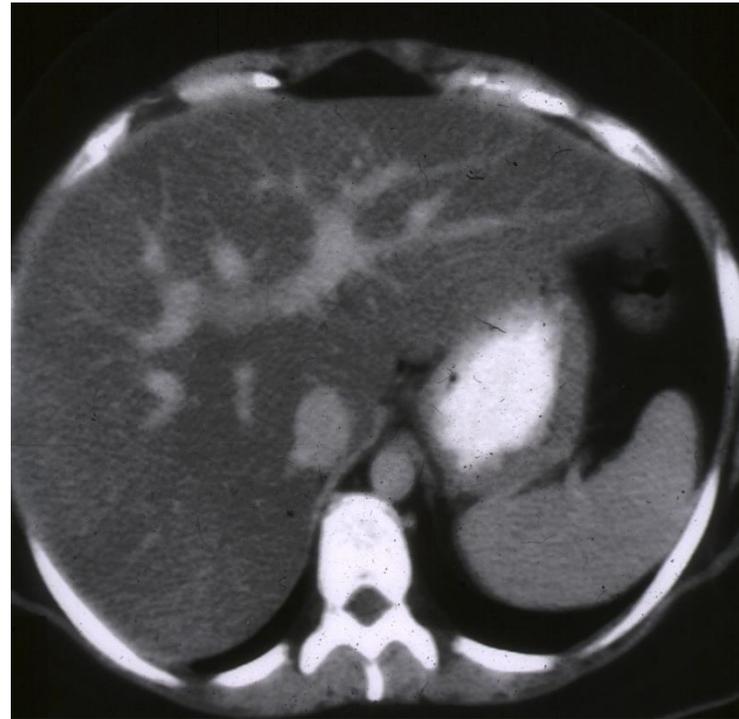
Clinical Variable	Not NASH (n=89)	NASH (n=40)	P Value
BMI	31.7 (5.3)	34.4 (5.4)	0.01
Fasting Insulin	14 (8.4)	23.2 (13)	<0.0005
ALT (U/L)	36.2 (15.7)	50.9 (19.6)	<0.0005
AST (U/L)	25.6 (7.4)	36.3 (13.1)	<0.0005
HDL (mg/dL)	49.2 (15.7)	44.3 (9)	0.03
Adiponectin (ng/mL)	11028 (13078)	7815 (4811)	0.02
hsCRP (ng/mL)	5355 (5537)	7351 (6397)	0.04
CK-18 (U/L)	210.3 (118)	307.1 (233.1)	0.02

NAFLD: sonographic evidence

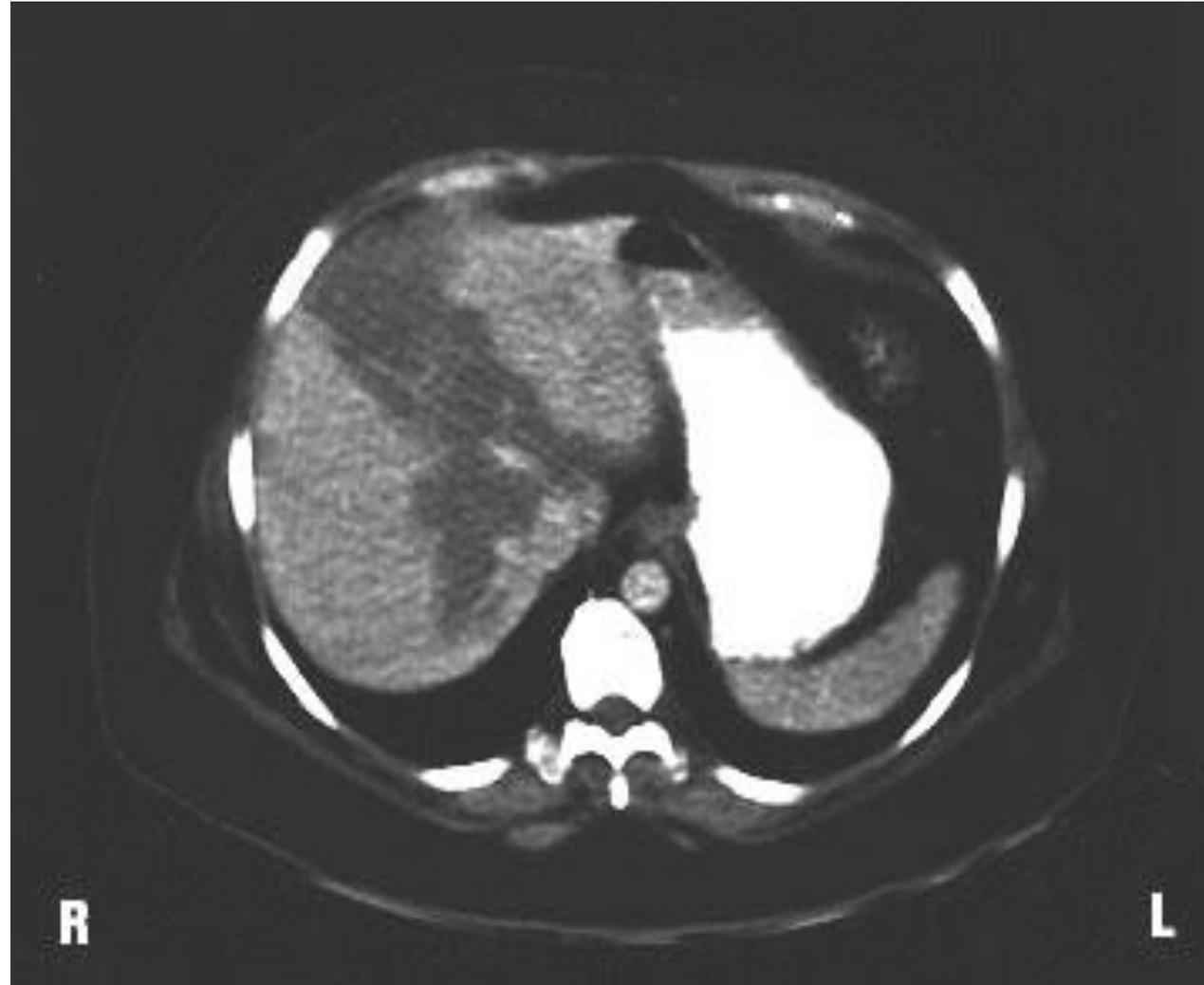


- Bright liver
- Echotexture increased compared to kidney
- Vascular blurring

CT scan: fatty liver



Fat in the liver may be focal



Treatment of NASH

The Metabolic Syndrome



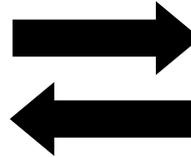
Farnesoid-X Receptor Agonist

Weight Loss

Antioxidants

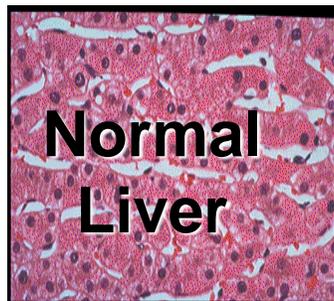
Insulin Sensitizing Agents

Insulin Resistance

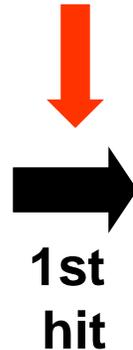


- Cytokines
- Adipokines
- Oxidative stress
- Others

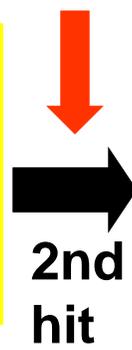
Lipid Lowering Agents



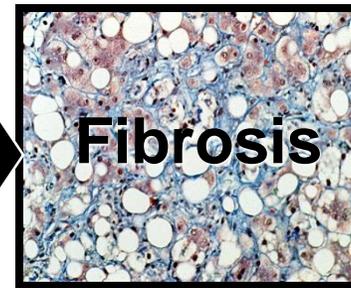
Normal Liver



Steatosis

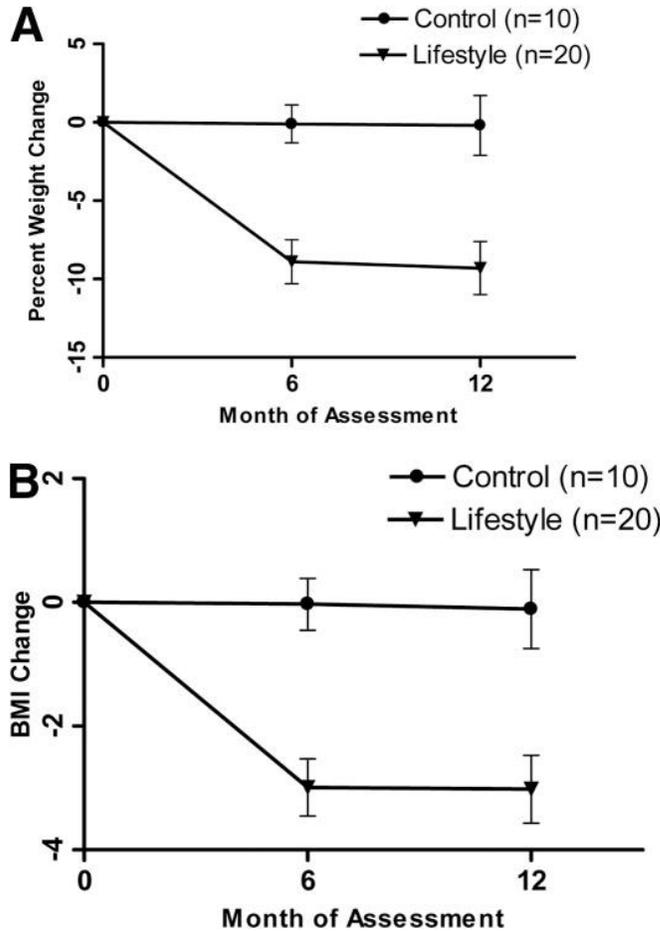


NASH



Fibrosis

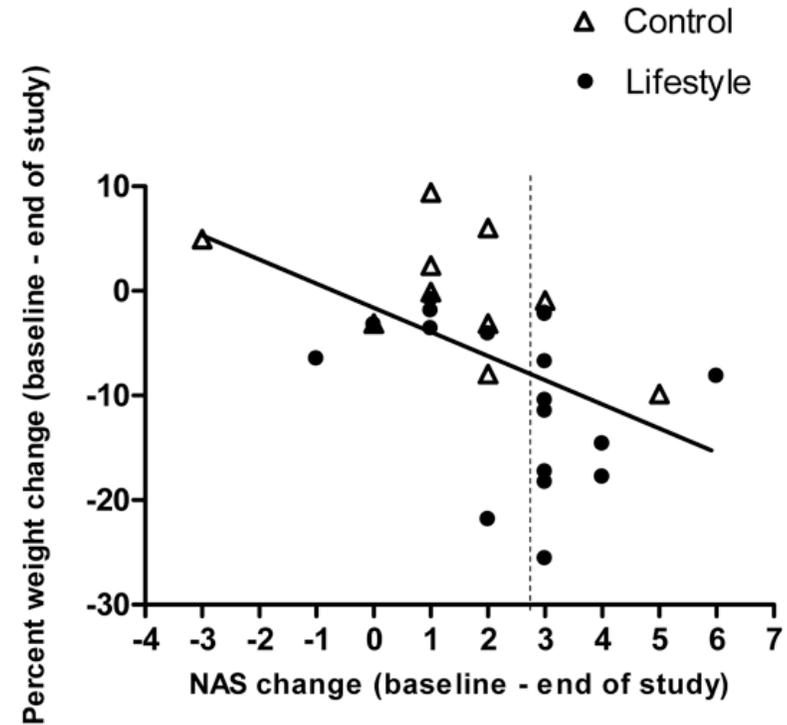
Weight Loss Works



31 Patients
Randomized,
controlled trial

40% in
intervention
group lost 10%
body weight vs
0% in control
group

72% vs 30%
achieved study
endpoint



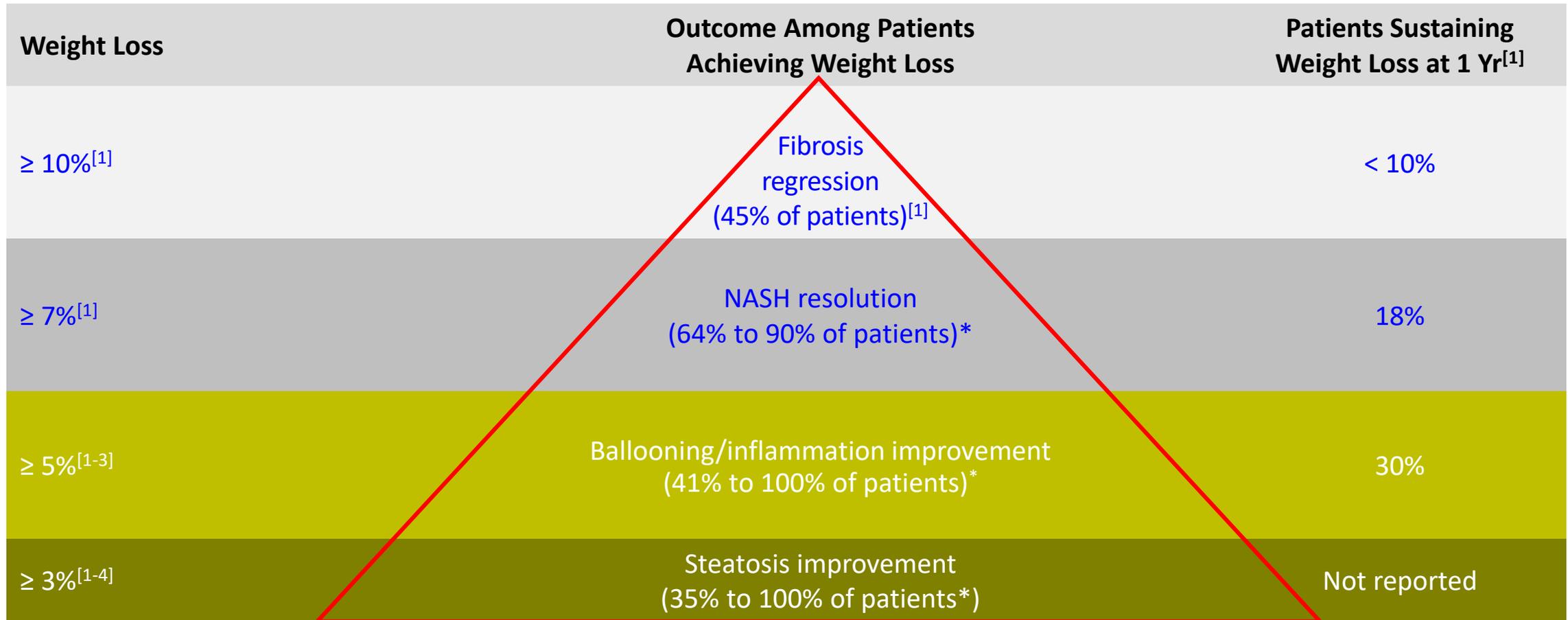
Weight loss of $\geq 7\%$ associated
with improvement in all
parameters of NASH except
fibrosis (need 10% for fibrosis)

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease

Weight loss works

- 36 patients with obesity underwent paired liver biopsies at time of laparoscopic gastric banding and 24 months later
- Mean weight loss 34 kg
- Histologic improvements in steatosis, inflammation, and fibrosis
 - Only 4 fulfilled criteria for NASH at second biopsy (24 at entry)
 - 18 had improvement in fibrosis by 2 stages

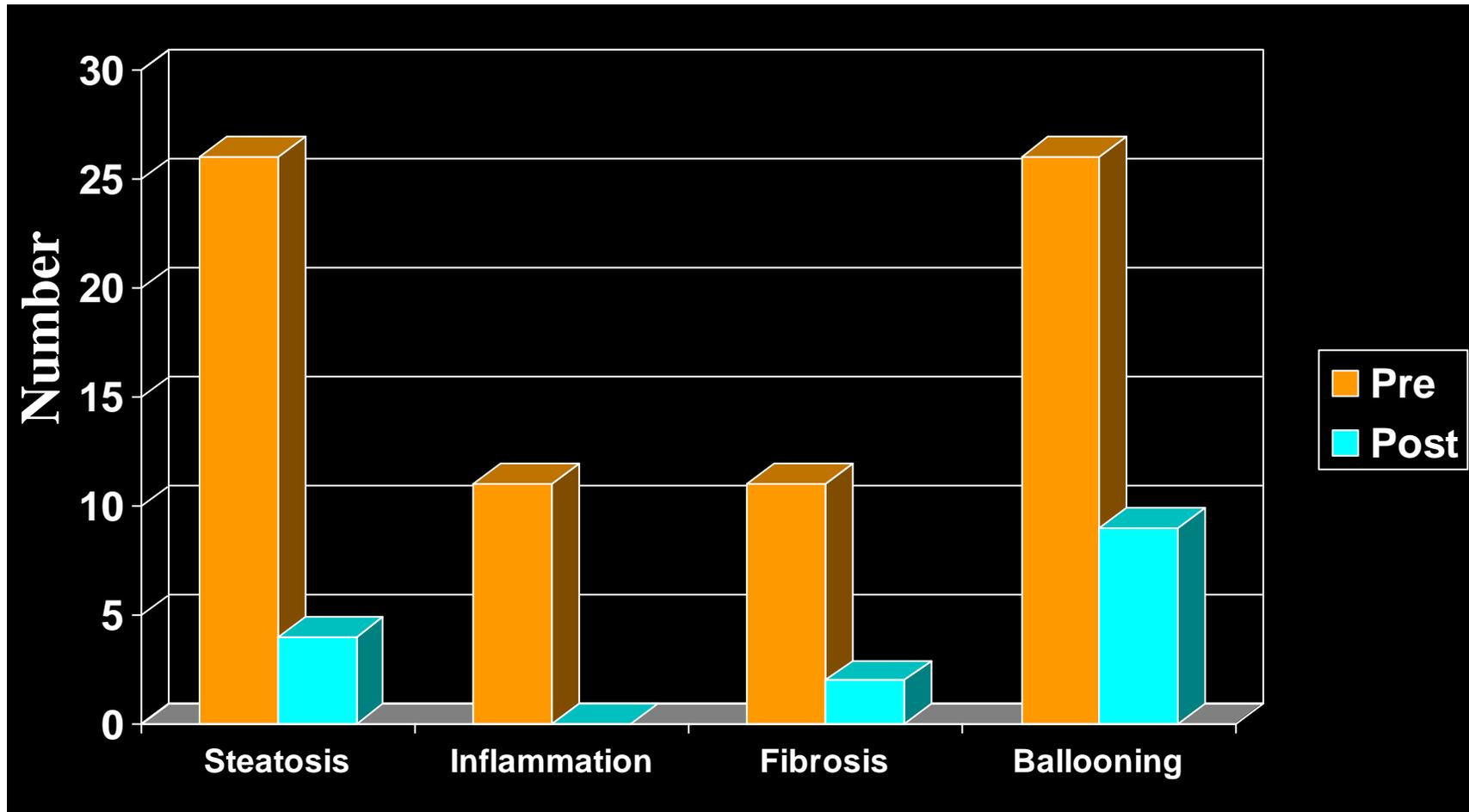
Percentage of Weight Loss Associated With Histologic Improvement in NAFLD



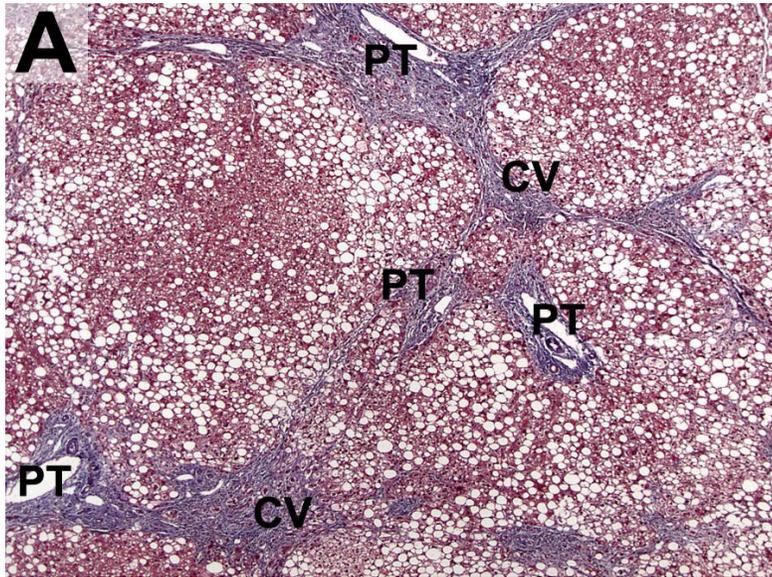
*Depending on degree of weight loss.

1. Vilar-Gomez. Gastroenterology. 2015;149:367. 2. Promrat. Hepatology. 2010;51:121.
3. Harrison. Hepatology. 2009;49:80. 4. Wong. J Hepatol. 2013;59:536.

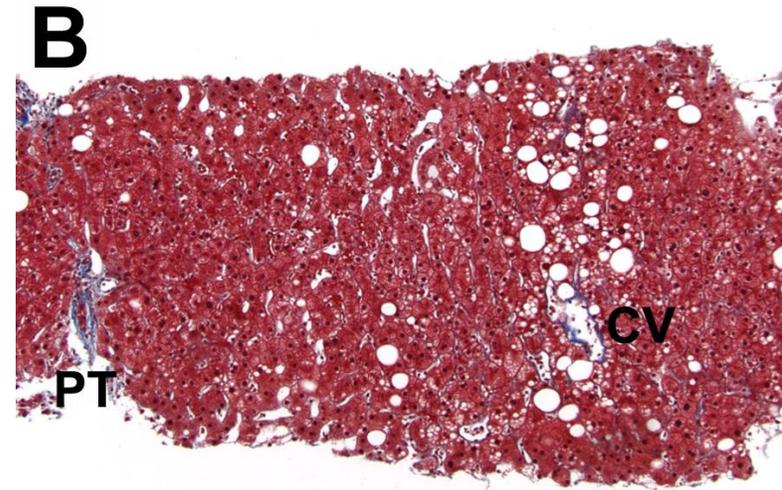
Liver Histology After Gastric Bypass



Significant Improvement in histology following bariatric surgery



1st biopsy

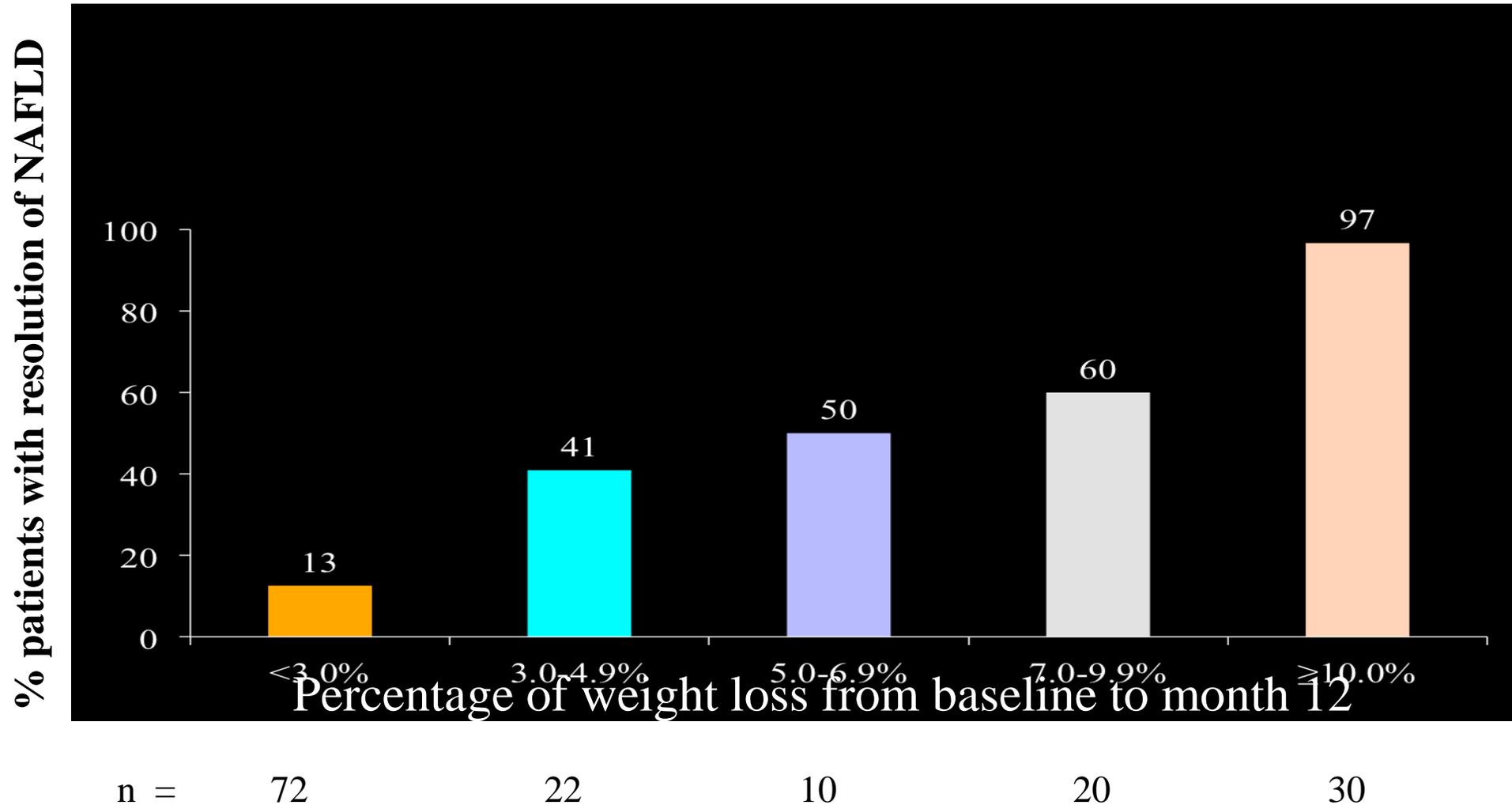


2nd biopsy at 8.5 months

Lifestyle Modification Program

- Assessed benefits of dietician led lifestyle modification for 12 months
 - Weekly meetings x 4 month, then monthly x 8
 - Moderate carbohydrate, low fat, low glycemic index
 - Emphasis on fruits and vegetables
 - Exercise: moderate intensity for 30 minutes 3-5 days/week
 - Increased to daily
- 154 Patients Enrolled
- Primary Endpoint
 - Remission of NAFLD: IHTG of < 5% by MRS
- 64% in intervention group resolved NAFLD
- 20% in control group resolved NAFLD

Degree of weight loss and resolution of NAFLD by hepatic TG content



Exercise

A recent large, cross-sectional study assessed the relationship between meeting/exceeding US national guidelines for physical activity and NAFLD severity

- Self-reported
- 813 patients
- Divided into 3 exercise categories based on time spent in activity and metabolic equivalents (METS):
 - Inactive (54%)
 - Moderate (20%): >150 min/week; Activities with MET values 3-5.9
 - Vigorous (26%): >75 min/week: Activities with MET values >6



Exercise

- Vigorous exercise associated with decreased adjusted odds of having NASH
 - OR: 0.65 (0.43-0.98)
- Doubling recommended time spent in vigorous exercise (>150 min/week), associated with decreased adjusted odds of advanced fibrosis
 - OR:0.53 (0.29-0.97)
 - ★ Younger age, higher education, higher income, lower BMI and no diabetes

Exercise

- Optimal Intensity
 - Goal is to maintain a lifestyle change
 - Moderate exercise, burning ~400 kcal/session
 - 3 times/week
 - Improves insulin resistance
 - Overall energy expenditure achieved per work-out more important than intensity
 - » Training at 60% VO₂max as effective as 80% VO₂max
 - Weight loss
 - Need to work out for longer period of time

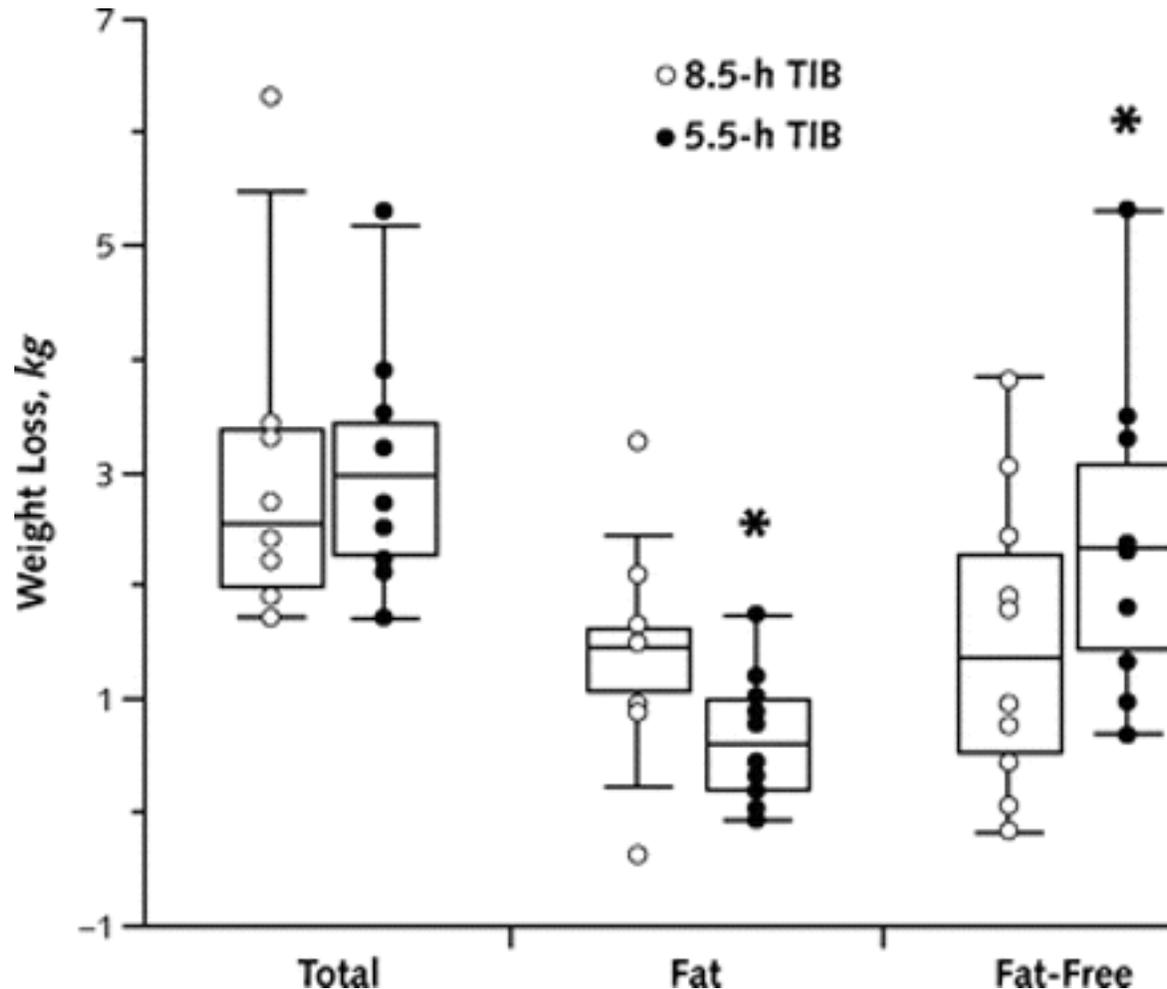
Sleep

10 overweight adults assigned to sleep 8.5 vs 5.5 hours each night for 14 days

Moderate caloric restriction

Lost same amount of weight (~6.6 pounds)

Sleep curtailment decreased proportion of weight lost as fat by 55% and increased loss of fat-free mass by 60%



Treatment: Lipid Lowering Agents

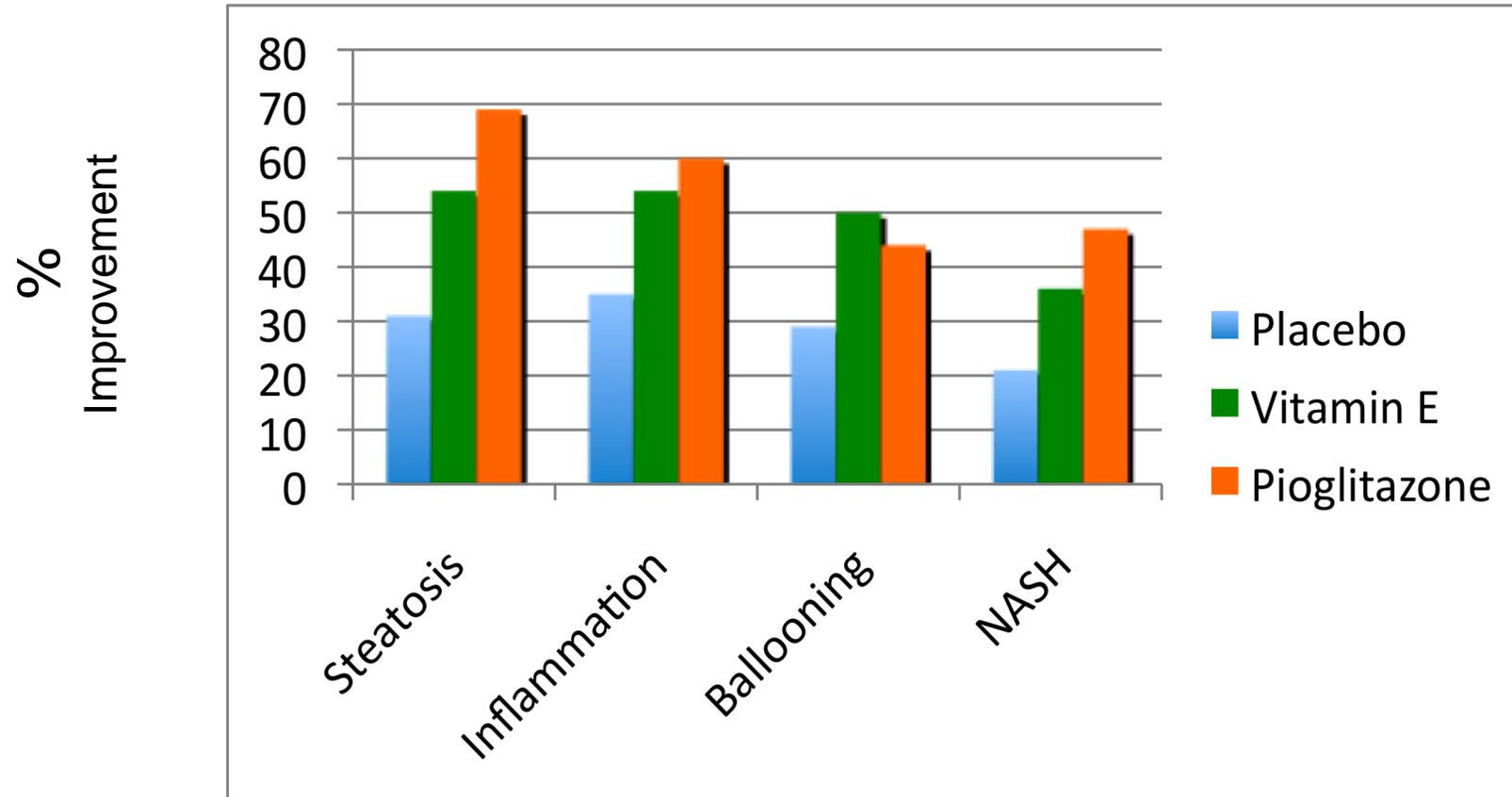
Study	Design (mts)	Meds	N	ALT	Hist
Laurin	Open label (12)	Clofibrate	16	-	-
Basaranoglu	RCT (1)	Gemfibrozil	46	+	NA
Horlander	Open label (12)	Atrovastatin	7	+	+
Kiyici	Open label (6)	Atrovastatin	27	+	NA
Hatzitolios	Open label (6)	Atrovastatin		+	NA
Gomez-Dominguez	Open label (12)	Atrovastatin	25	+	NA
Rallidis	Open label (7)	Pravastatin	5	+	+/-
Merat	RCT (6)	Probucol	30	+	NA

Statins are safe, improve ALT, not histology

Treatment: Insulin Sensitizing Agents

Study	N	Drug	Duration (months)	Design	ALT	Histology
Caldwell	10	Troglitazone	3-6	Open label	+	+
Acosta	8	Pioglitazone	2-12	Open label	+	N/A
Shadid	5	Pioglitazone	4.5	Open label	+	N/A
Sanyal	21	Pioglitazone + Vit E	6	RCT	+	+
Promrat	18	Pioglitazone	12	Open label	+	+
Tetri	30	Rosiglitazone	12	Open label	+	+
Belfort	55	Pioglitazone ± Diet	6	RCT	+	+
Marchesini	14	Metformin	4	Open label	+	N/A
Nair	15	Metformin	12	Open label	+	N/A
Bugianesi	55	Metformin	6	RCT	+	+
Uygun	17	Metformin	6	RCT	+	-
Duseja	7	Metformin	6	Open label	+	N/A
Schwimmer	10	Metformin	6	Open label	+	N/A

Pioglitazone and Vitamin E PIVENS Trial



Summary of PIVENS findings

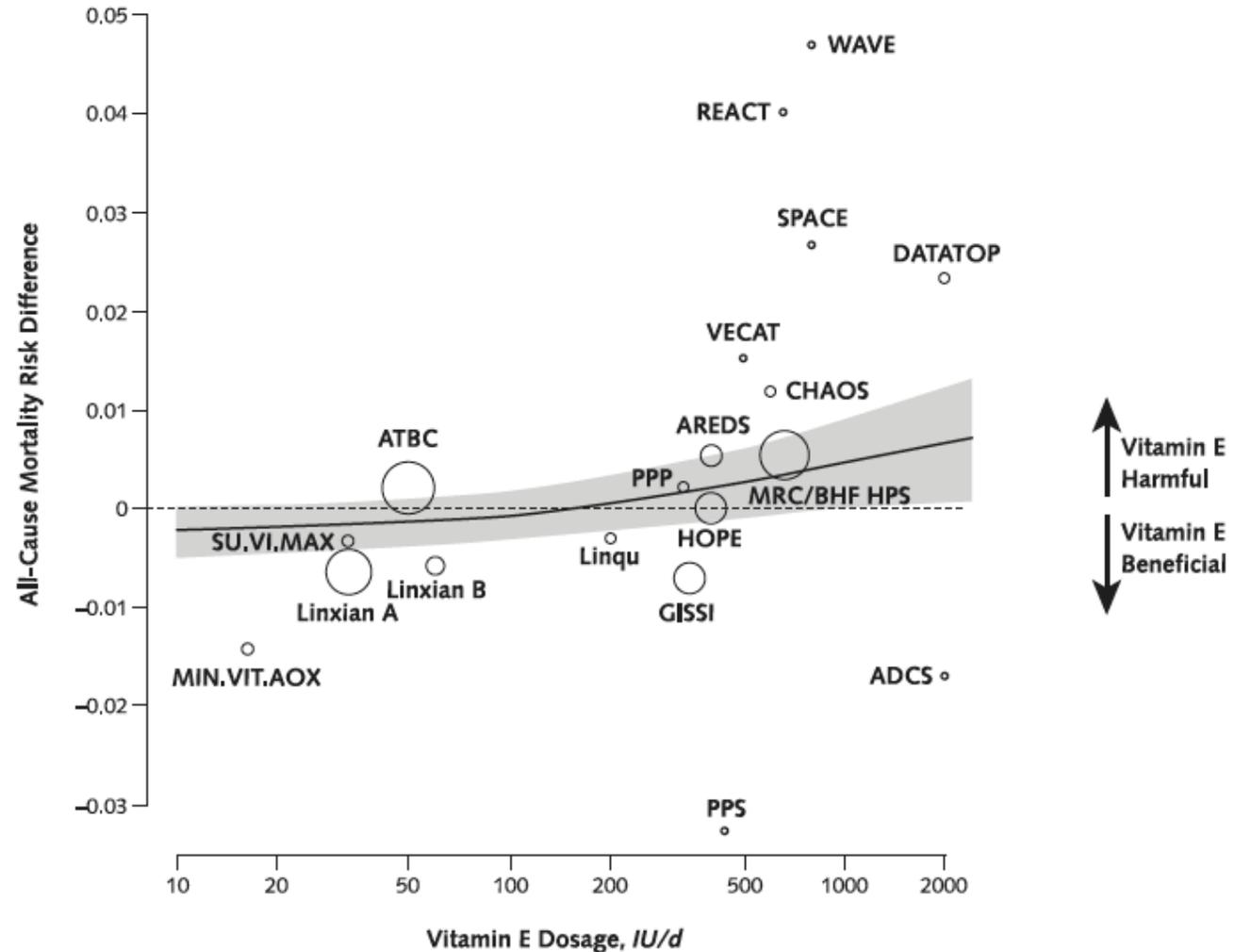
- Vitamin E effective over placebo for NASH
- Pioglitazone improved, IR, ALT, steatosis and inflammation, but not 1° outcome
- Only 34% (Pio) and 43% (Vit E) had histological response, neither improved fibrosis
- Cannot generalize to diabetics or cirrhotics

Why not empirically treat suspected NAFLD with vitamin E ?

- 70-75% have NAFLD, most isolated steatosis
- 50% of patients don't respond to Vitamin E
 - liver enzymes are not reliable to assess quiescence or progression
- The long-term safety remains unknown
- Prostate cancer risk? (absolute increase 1.6 per 1000 person yrs)

Meta-analysis of Vitamin E – increased mortality?

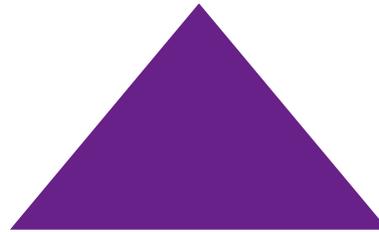
- Different forms of Vitamin E
 - Natural vs synthetic
- Confounders not controlled for:
 - High dose Zn supplementation
 - Use of concomitant vitamin A
 - Smoking
- Trials not uniformly using Vit E as a treatment
- RCTs with no death excluded



NO

Pioglitazone for NASH

- Weight gain (2–4.7 kg)
- Cardiac toxicity¹
- Fracture risk²
- ? Bladder cancer³



Improve²

- Insulin sensitivity
- ALT
- Steatosis
- Inflammation
- ? Ballooning



Meta-analysis of 19 trials (16,390 patients) with T2DM, pioglitazone¹

- Death, MI, or CVA: 4.4% of pioglitazone vs 5.7% of control ($P = 0.005$)
- More CHF in pioglitazone (2.3%) vs control (1.8%) ($P = .002$), no effect on mortality

Abbreviations: ALT, alanine aminotransferase; CHF, congestive heart failure; CVA, cerebrovascular accident; MI, myocardial infarction; NASH, nonalcoholic steatohepatitis; T2DM, type 2 diabetes mellitus.

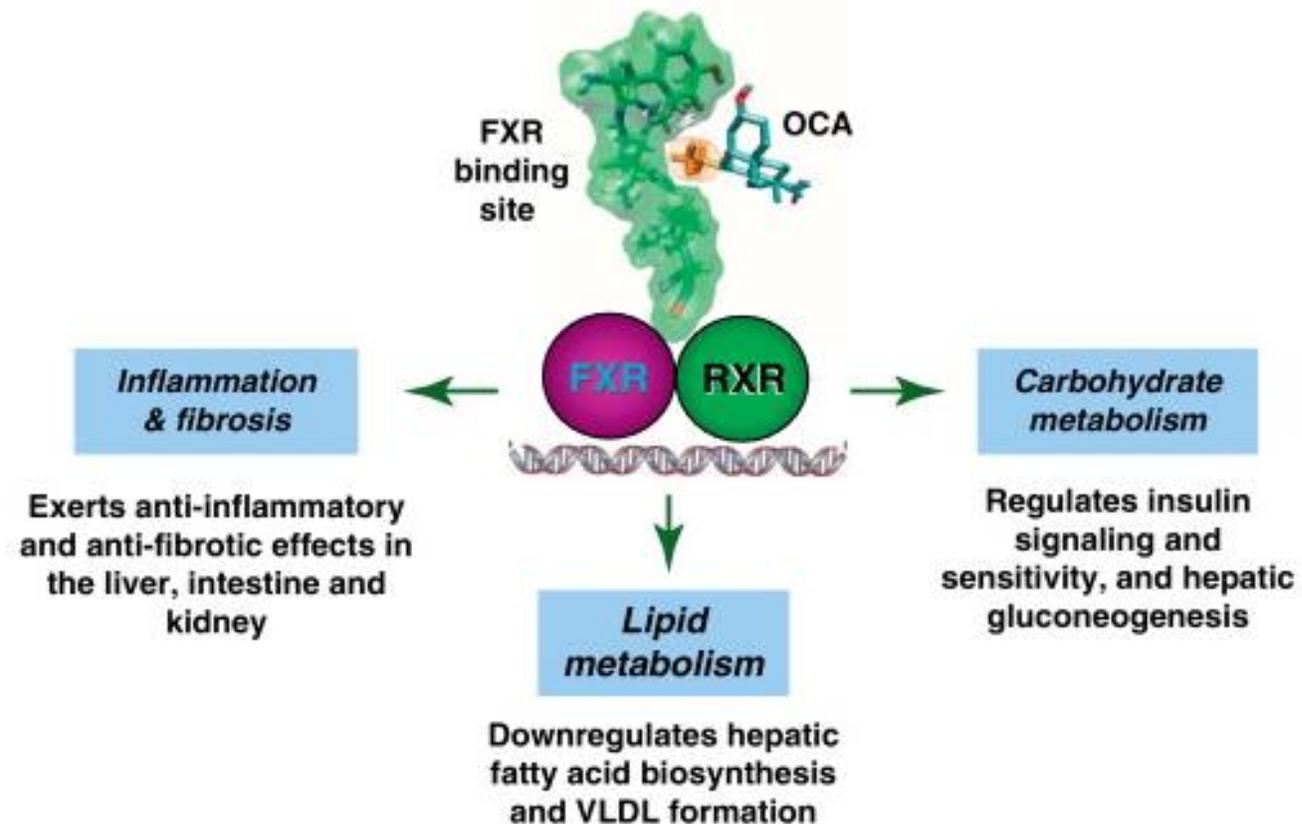
1. Lincoff AM, et al. *JAMA*. 2007;298:1180-1188. 2. Ratziu V. *Nat Rev Gastroenterol Hepatol*. 2013;10:646-685.

3. Lewis JD, et al. *Diabetes Care*. 2011;34:916-922.

Courtesy of Mary Rinella, MD.

Obeticholic acid

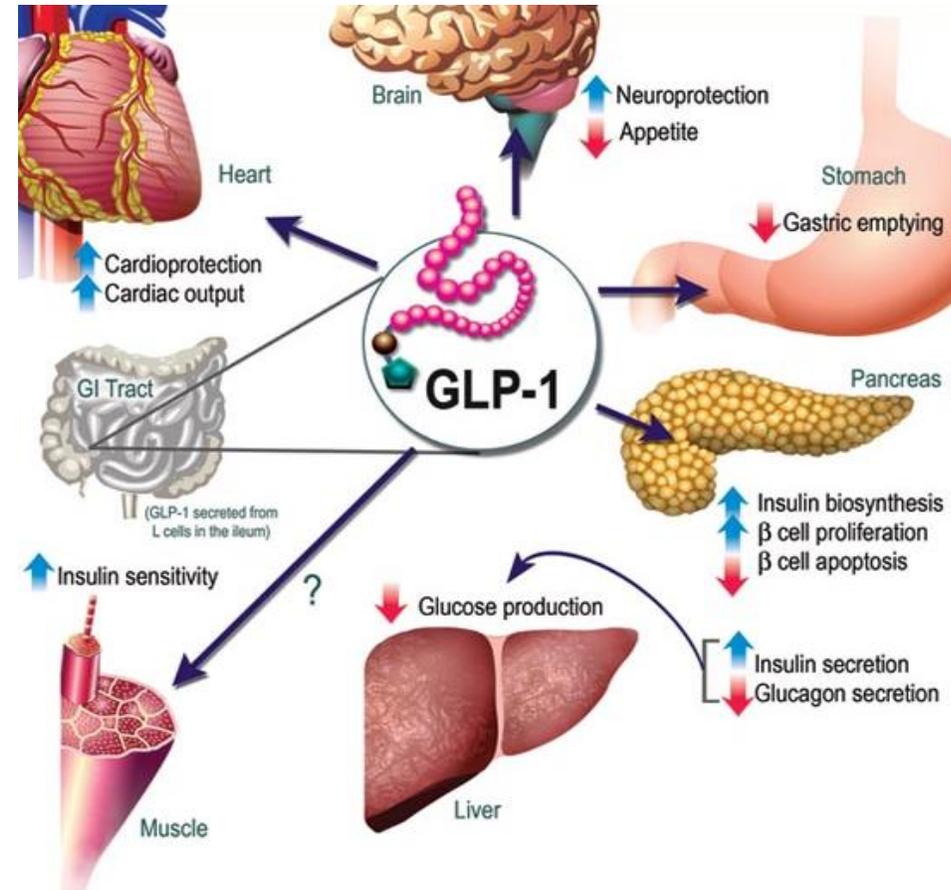
Semi-synthetic bile acid derivative
Farnesoid-X Receptor (FXR) agonist



Glucagon-Like Peptide-1 Analogue: Liraglutide

GLP-1

- Controls serum glucose
 - Induces insulin secretion
 - Reduces glucagon secretion
- Induces weight loss, suppression of appetite and delayed gastric emptying



LEAN Study: Liraglutide in Overweight NASH Patients Without Cirrhosis

Phase 2 (n=52)
(UK, 4 sites)

Double-blind, placebo-controlled
Histologic evidence of definite NASH
(steatosis >5%, hepatocyte ballooning, lobular inflammation)
Liver biopsy within 6 months of entry
Stable type 2 diabetes allowed
No Child-Pugh B/C cirrhosis

LEAN: Liraglutide Efficacy and Action in NASH.

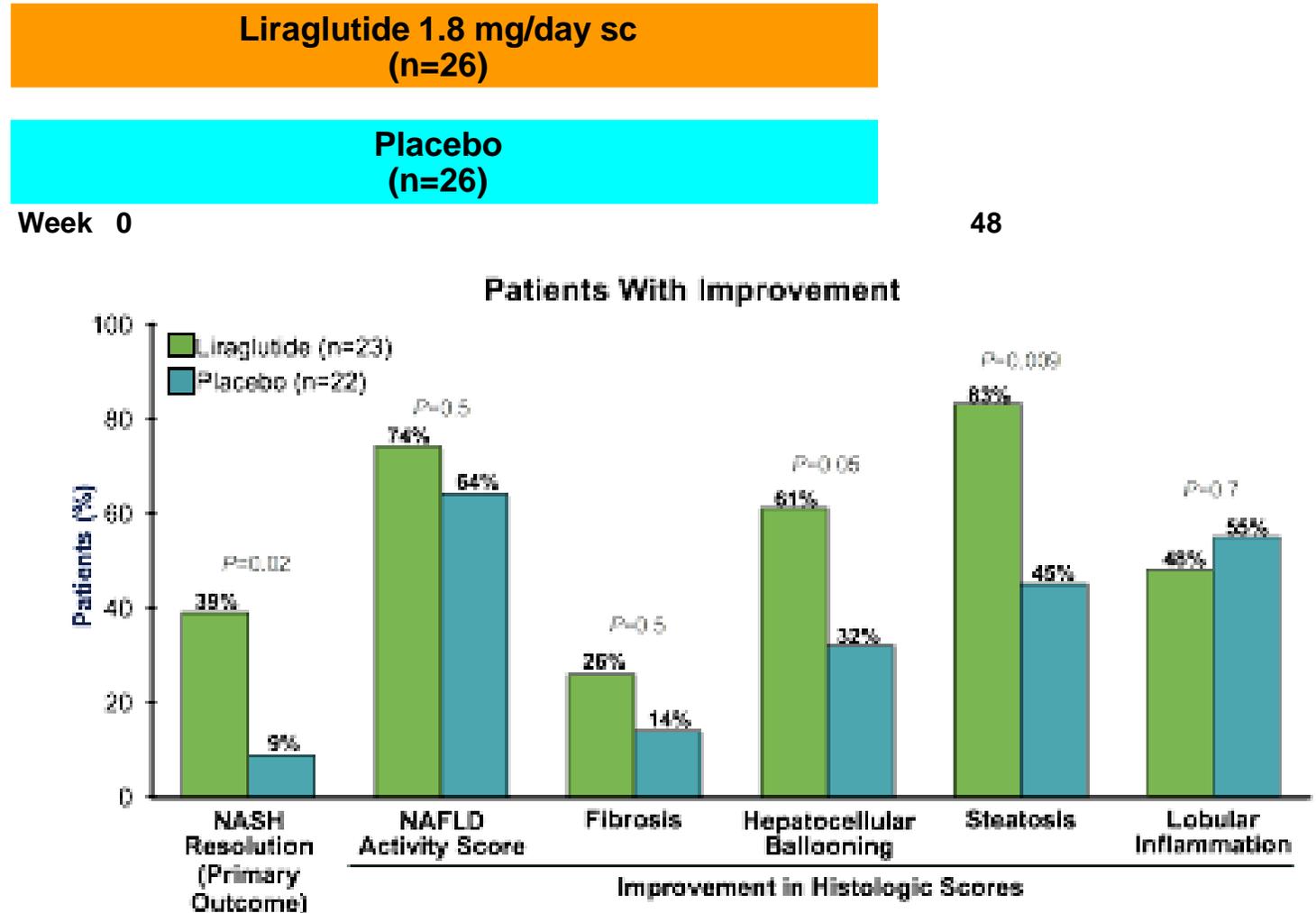
Patients stratified by diabetes status.

Primary endpoint (week 72, ITT):

Improvement in liver histology without worsening of fibrosis.

Improvement: disappearance of hepatocellular ballooning.

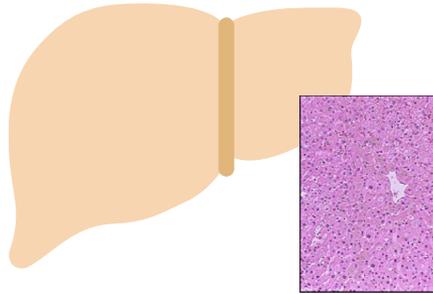
Worsening of fibrosis: any increase in Kleiner fibrosis stage.



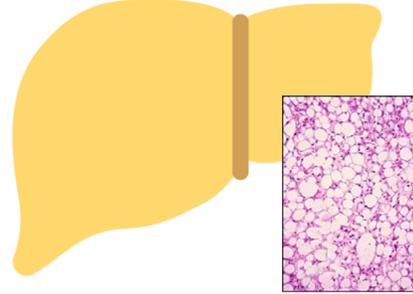
Examples of NASH Treatments in Phase II or III Investigations

NAFLD

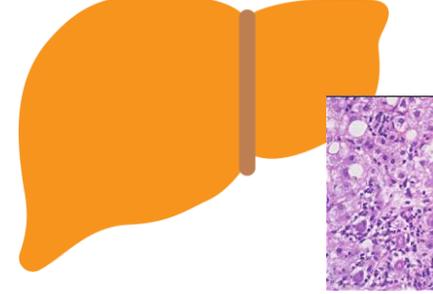
Normal Liver



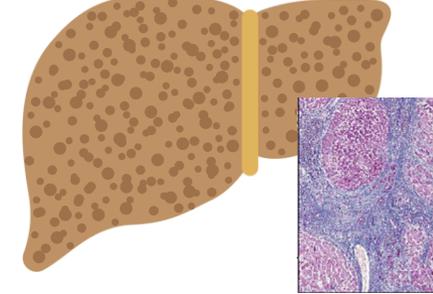
Steatosis (NAFL)



Steatohepatitis (NASH)



Cirrhosis



Targets related to insulin resistance and/or lipid metabolism

Targets related to lipotoxicity and oxidative stress

Targets related to inflammation and immune activation

Targets related to cell death (apoptosis and necrosis)

Targets related to fibrogenesis and collagen turnover

PPAR γ : Pioglitazone
 GLP-1: Liraglutide, semaglutide
 ACC: GS-0976, PF-05221304
 SCD1: Aramchol
 FGF21: BMS-986036
 THR- β : MGL-3196, VK2809

PPAR α/δ : **Elafibranor**
 PPAR $\alpha/\delta/\gamma$: Lanifibranor
FXR: **OCA**, GS-9674, tropifexor
 FGF19: NGM282
 MPC: MSDC-0602K

CCR2/5: Cenicriviroc (inflammatory target but affects fibrosis)

P2X7R: SGM-1019

ASK1: Selonsertib (cell death target but affects fibrosis)

Caspase: Emericasan

Galectin: GR-MD-02

Bold = phase III

Some agents have multiple targets



Summary

- NAFLD is part of a systemic inflammatory process and other diseases (cardiovascular) are associated
- More prevalent than previously estimated
 - Hispanics and diabetics at particular risk
- Biopsy is required for research studies not practical in clinical practice, steatosis benign from hepatic point of view, NASH can progress to cirrhosis
- Smoking and excess alcohol are bad, but coffee and sleep likely good

Summary

- Weight loss goal of 10% is best for immediate first level histopathology improvement
- Moderate exercise may not be enough to effect change in NASH. Vigorous exercise for >150 min/week ideal
- Vitamin E may be considered for patients with proven NASH with caveats (use natural Vit E)
- Statins are safe and effective for lipid disorders, not NASH
- Bariatric surgery is an expensive solution
- Dietician visits for all patients
- Consider weight loss contract
- Fructose free diet
- Vegetarian diet preferred
- Mediterranean diet optimal
- Stop use of plastic water bottles, containers, bisPhenols

Thank You!

