NUTRITIONAL ASPECTS AND DISINFORMATION IN LIVER DISEASE: A QUESTIONNAIRE-BASED SURVEY IN ITALIAN PATIENTS

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OBJECTIVES
The study focused on a secondary aspect of liver diseases, never investigated in Italy so far. The study purpose was in fact to obtain the patients’ perception about the role of nutrition during the disease phases and in general for liver welfare, with the final aim of understanding the importance given to nutrition by patients and the current disinformation to be possibly tackled.

METHODS
EpaC is the most important Italian NGO for hepatopathic patients. An anonymous web-based questionnaire was published on the association website www.epac.it. It was composed of multiple choice and open questions investigating the general info of the patient, health state, and opinions/perceptions about nutritional aspects.

RESULTS
483 patients participated the survey. The profile of participants was assessed concerning sex, age, health condition, presence of cirrhosis. Mean age was 52.9 (min 24 – max 82), 60% males, 76% HCV-positive, 15% cirrhotic (Figure 1).

Although in low percentages, 5% and 13% respectively consider vegetables (in particular spinach and cabbages) and fruit (in particular dried fruits) as harmful (Figure 4).

Moreover, 53% think a vegan/vegetarian diet is essential, but 81% would like to have a specialist nutritional advice (Figure 5).

In fact, different opinions have been revealed upon what makes the difference between good and bad nutrition (Figure 6). These data point out the lack of information around nutritional aspects and the need for a nutritional advice during and after the therapy.

CONCLUSIONS
Considering that nutritional aspects are important in everybody’s life, they are particularly relevant in case of liver disease. The results shown express patients’ degree of knowledge about these aspects and highlights that a certain disinformation is widespread. The results also point out liver-suffering patients’ need and want to receive clinicians’ evidence-based advice/information on nutrition and lifestyle as part of the routine counselling and to develop an educational campaign on nutrition for hepatopathic patients.