

Acute liver failure in the ICU

Acute liver failure (ALF) is a rare, but potentially devastating illness that occurs most often in younger patients. Many have no pre-existing major health problems and the decision as to whether emergency liver transplantation is required remains challenging. Beyond the use of transplantation, the benefit of specific treatments provided in isolation is uncertain, however a comprehensive and coordinated approach to managing this complex patient group may lead to improved outcomes. The aetiology and key patient characteristics are important predictors of outcome in ALF patients and a methodical approach to assessment and ICU management is essential for optimal outcomes. Recent findings relevant to Australasia provide useful insights regarding these issues and help inform the best approach to contemporary practice. Practical strategies based on relevant local experience, including the optimised and coordinated use of various standard ICU therapies as well as the role of emergency liver transplantation, will be reviewed as part of this presentation.