Liver disease a possible predictor of stroke: study

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People suffering from fatty liver disease may be three times more likely to suffer a stroke than individuals without fatty liver, according to a study by researchers at St. Michael's Hospital and the London Health Sciences Centre. The study is the first to find a link between nonalcoholic fatty liver disease - a disease characterized by the accumulation of fat in the liver in non drinkers - and stroke.

In a research letter to the editor in the journal *Epidemiology* released Thursday, Drs. Joel Ray, Ivan Ying and colleagues explain they found high levels of enzymes known to be markers of liver disease in adults who had an acute stroke. Between 2005 and 2009, they reviewed 103 consecutive adults who had an MRI-proven acute stroke between 2005 and 2009 and compared them to 200 adults with suspected acute stroke, but whose MRI was normal, thereby ruling out acute stroke.

"The risk of stroke in relation to fatty liver disease has never been tested," Dr. Ray says. "Our study shows a strong link between the two and the possibility in future that currently available blood liver enzyme tests, or novel markers of fatty liver, may be used to predict the risk of stroke and help us better care for and treat at risk patients."

Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease is a common condition that often has no symptoms or complications. Risk factors include obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes and, especially, insulin resistance.

While the findings are promising, additional research is needed to

validate the study's findings, Dr. Ray said.

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital