Nutrition in the News:

Triple antioxidant therapy for Hepatitis C dramatically improves viral load & lowers abnormal liver enzymes--Great news for the 3.9 million Americans with this "incurable, potentially fatal" liver disease.

In 3 patients of hepatitis C,

1. ***alpha lipoic acid at 600 mg/day*,**
2. **selenomethionine at 400 ug/day and**
3. **silymarin at 900 mg/day,**
4. **along with vitamins C and E and, in some cases, coenzyme Q10**

resulted in *dramatic reductions* in liver enzymes and improvements in viral load and a return to normal functioning in chronic hepatitis C patients ***[JB editorial comment: the most common chronic blood-borne infectious disease in the U.S. today, hepatitis C can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer in some patients and results in about 10,000 deaths and 1,000 liver transplants annually in the United States. A cousin of Hepatitis A and B and perhaps the most insidious of all liver viruses, hepatitis C destroys the liver over decades without the victim knowing it's there. By the time hepatitis C is detected, (usually through symptoms such as sense of weakness, a mild rash, swelling of the ankle, etc) the liver can be badly damaged or precancerous]:***
Berkson BM. A Conservative Triple Antioxidant Approach to the Treatment of Hepatitis C: Combination of Alpha Lipoic Acid (Thioctic Acid), Silymarin, and Selenium: Three Case Histories. Med Klin*, 1999; volume 94 (Suppl III): pages 84-89.*

For your additional information: here's a recent Reuters Health report on Hepatitis C:

Hepatitis C leading chronic blood-borne infection in US

NEW YORK, Aug 19, 1999 (Reuters Health) -- A national survey finds that nearly 4 million people in the United States are or have been infected with the hepatitis C virus. This makes it the most common chronic blood-born infection in the country, according to a report published in the August 19, 1999 issue of The New England Journal of Medicine.

Intravenous injection of illicit drugs and high-risk sexual behavior account for most cases of the infection, the researchers note. Individuals can become infected with hepatitis C through either sexual transmission or through contact with infected blood.

The Hepatic C viral infection is typically asymptomatic, but chronic infection over decades can lead to serious -- sometimes fatal -- liver disease. The infection leads to up to 10,000 deaths in the US each year.

Researchers led by Dr. Miriam Alter, of the Hepatitis Branch of the CDC's National Center for Infectious Diseases, analyzed data from the third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, conducted between 1988 and 1994. A total of 21,241 blood samples from participants ages 6 and over were tested for hepatitis C antibodies, indicating an immune response to the virus, and genetic material linked to the virus.

Antibodies were detected in 1.8% of samples. The experts estimate that this

percentage equals about 3.9 million infected individuals in the US population. About three quarters (74%) of these samples contained traces of hepatitis C genetic material.
Prevalence of Hepatitis C in the U.S: about 2.7 to 4 million Americans have a chronic, ongoing infection.
Of those who were positive for the hepatitis C virus, 65% were 30 to 49 years of age. Infection was associated with a history of using cocaine or marijuana and with a history of high-risk sexual behaviors. Infection was not associated with working in health-related occupations, with surgery, or with dental visits. Neither race nor ethnicity was associated with hepatitis C infection, but educational level, poverty, and divorce or separation were risk factors.
``Public health programs should focus on preventing the initiation of high-risk drug-related and sexual behavior and on providing risk-reduction counseling and services to those engaged in high-risk activities,'' Alter and colleagues recommend.
``In addition, we need to develop more effective therapies for persons with infection,'' **they add** ***[Triple antioxidant therapy with lipoic acid, silymarin and selenomethionine the answer?--editorial comment].*** **They note that the incidence of liver disease among younger persons now infected with hepatitis C ``is likely to increase during the next 10 to 20 years as this (group) reaches the age at which the complications of chronic liver disease typically occur.''**
SOURCE: The New England Journal of Medicine 1999; volume 341: pages 556-562.

All for now.
James Braly, MD