

Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC) Full Clinical Guideline

Reference no.: CG-T/2012/217

PSC is a chronic, cholestatic disease characterised by inflammation and fibrosis of both intra and extrahepatic bile ducts, leading to the formation of multifocal bile duct strictures.

2:1 Male with mean age at Δ of 40 years

Associated with an \uparrow risk of cholangiocarcinoma (lifetime incidence 10-15%, 50% Δ in 1st yr).

60-80% have concomitant IBD (majority UC). Colitis in PSC is typically mild with a pancolitis (87 vs 54%), backwash ileitis (51 vs 7%) and rectal sparing (52 vs 6%)

Symptoms:

RUQ pain, fatigue, pruritus (see management of pruritus in cholestasis), weight loss. 40% asymptomatic at diagnosis.

Diagnosis:

MRCP

Liver biopsy only indicated if MRCP normal and either small duct PSC suspected or in cases where an AIH overlap suspected

Serum IgG4 should be checked once at initial diagnosis. If raised then a liver biopsy to look for evidence of an autoimmune cholangiopathy is indicated

25% of cases have only intrahepatic disease on cholangiogram, < 5% only extrahepatic

Small duct PSC has better prognosis (transplant free survival 29 vs 17 yrs)

No role for the routine use of autoantibodies in diagnosis (including p-ANCA)

Management:

Other than liver transplantation there is no proven treatment for PSC

UDCA (13-15mg/kg/d) - no conclusive prove it either \downarrow risk of colorectal/ cholangiocarcinoma, or alters progression of liver disease. High dose (up to 25mg/kg/d) may be harmful.

(EASL give no specific recommendation, AASLD recommend UDCA not given)

Dominant stricture (defined as < 1.5mm diam in CBD or < 1mm in right or left hepatic ducts)

- Investigate for dominant stricture with MRCP if \uparrow bilirubin or pruritus
- If advanced PSC (evidence of portal hypertension and/or severe intrahepatic beading) avoid ERCP even with apparent dominant stricture and consider for transplant assessment
- If early PSC and jaundice \rightarrow CT/EUS to exclude cholangiocarcinoma (CCA) before ERCP and brushing (note sensitivity for CCA < 40%) + dilatation (stenting reserved for refractory cases)
- If CCA suspected a Ca 19-9 > 130u/ml has a sensitivity 79% and specificity 98%
- Consider post ERCP antibiotics for 3-4 days in addition to pre-procedure antibiotics in patients with PSC who undergo ERCP

PSC-AIH overlap: predominantly children/ young adults; typically sequential with AIH first. Characterised by biochemical and histological appearance of AIH, with cholangiographic appearance of PSC. Low threshold for MRCP in young patient with AIH. Treat AIH element with immunosuppressive therapy.

Monitoring:

The median time from diagnosis to death or transplantation is 10-12 years

All patients should have an initial colonoscopy as the colitis in PSC patients is often mild.

Those with colitis should have an annual colonoscopy – 30% risk of CRC over 20yrs – 76% right sided Annual USS – lifetime risk of GB cancer 2% and HCC 2%. Any GB mass (even < 1cm) should lead to consideration of cholecystectomy. Note lymphadenopathy common in PSC.

No role for routine measurement of Ca 19-9

Annual Vit A, D, E and clotting if Bilirubin > 34

Portal hypertension: Variceal surveillance if platelets < 140 or known cirrhosis. In cirrhotic patients follow [variceal surveillance guidance](#)

Osteoporosis: Less common than in PBC

DEXA scan at diagnosis with follow-up @ 2-5yrs depending on outcome

See [Osteoporosis in liver disease](#) guidance for advice on risk determination with FRAX score and treatment

IgG4 associated cholangitis/ Autoimmune pancreatitis:

Biochemical and cholangiographic features may mimic PSC or carcinoma of the pancreas.

Associated with ↑ IgG4 in serum (present in $\approx \frac{3}{4}$ patients) and staining on histological specimens.

85% of patients are men. Patients are older than the typical PSC patient and no association with IBD.

Further reading:

[AASLD guidelines, Hepatology, September 2022 AASLD guideline](#)

[EASL guidelines, J Hepatol, 2022](#)

[ACG clinical guideline: PSC. Am J Gastro May 2015](#)

[BSG/ UK PSC guidelines for the diagnosis and management of PSC 2019](#)

Documentation Controls **(these go at the end of the document but before any appendices)**

Reference Number CG-T/2012/217	Version: 3		Status Final	Final
Version / Amendment History	Version	Date	Author	Reason
	3	2022	Liver Management Group -Cross site teams	Previous version of guideline expired
Intended Recipients: All clinicians managing patients with liver disease				
Training and Dissemination: Forms part of liver handbook which is disseminated to all clinicians rotating through Hepatology				
Development of Guideline: Job Title: Dr A Lawson (Consultant Hepatologist)				
Consultation with: Liver management group				
Linked Documents: State the name(s) of any other relevant documents				
Keywords: PSC, Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis				
Business Unit Sign Off			Group: Liver Management Group -Cross site teams Date: 2022	
Divisional Sign Off			Group: Medicine Division Date: 21/04/2023	
Date of Upload			24/04/2023	
Review Date			April 2026	
Contact for Review			Dr Adam Lawson	