

Better Serving Those Who Served: The Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation's Efforts To Support Veterans



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What is Cholangiocarcinoma?

Cholangiocarcinoma is cancer of the bile ducts, or the slender tubes that carry the digestive fluid bile through the liver.
Cholangiocarcinoma is a rare and aggressive form of cancer, The 5-year survival rate for extrahepatic bile duct cancer is 10%.

What Does The Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation Do?

Founded in 2006, the *Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation* is a global 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and our mission is to support patients and render cholangiocarcinoma a treatable disease.

The CCF unites patients, caregivers, scientists, and corporate sponsors together in the fight to end cholangiocarcinoma. This is achieved through funding research grants, research advocacy, guidance for patients/caregivers, and an annual conference. The CCF also aids veterans with filing their claims to the VA.

What Are Liver Flukes?

Liver flukes are tiny, parasitic worms that survive via their host. They can be ingested and survive inside humans. There are several species of liver flukes. The ones associated with Cholangiocarcinoma are *Opisthorchis Verrini* and *Clonorchis sinensis*.

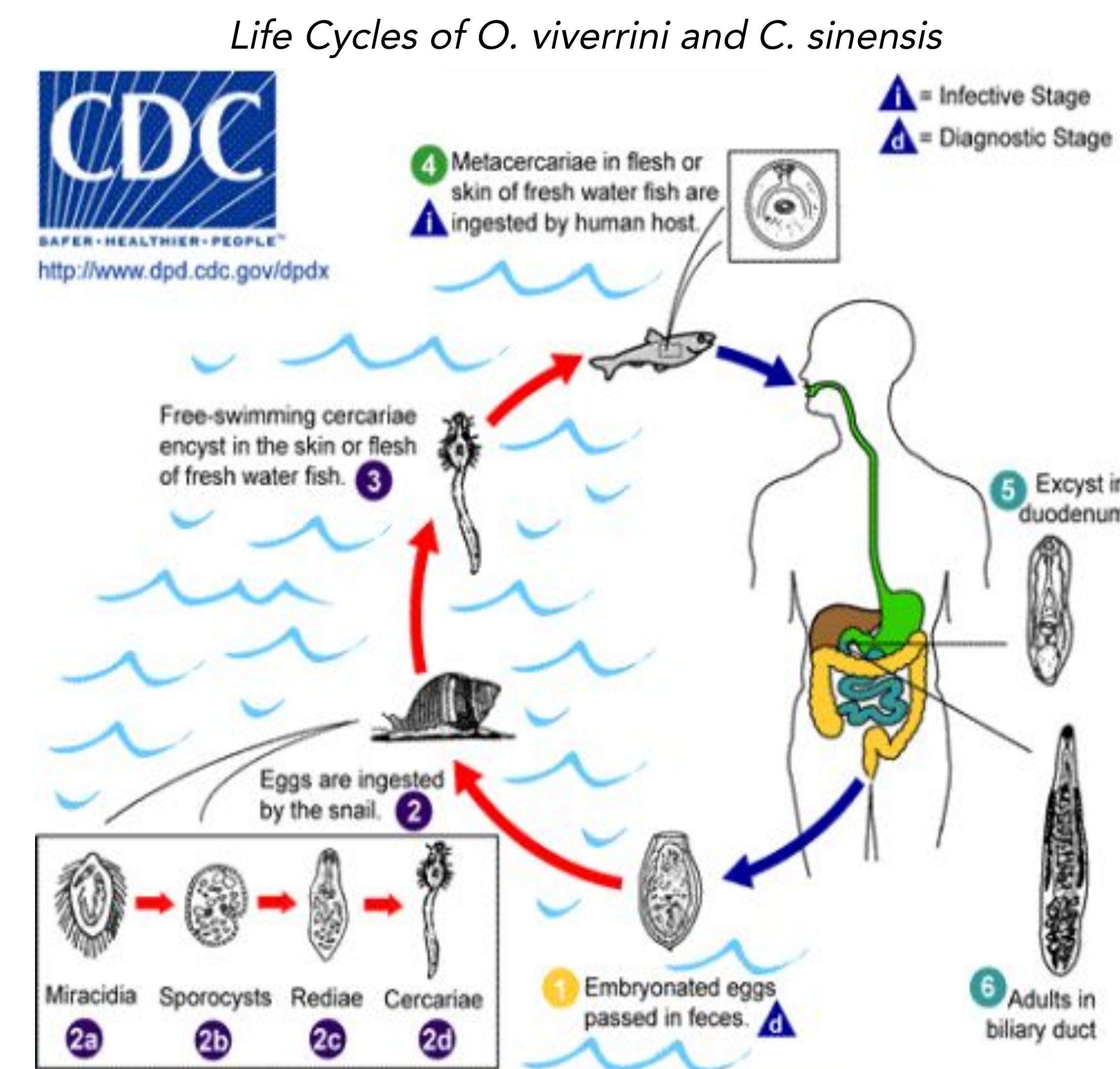
As stated on the CDC's page regarding Liver Flukes, "While most infected persons do not show any symptoms, infections that last a long time can result in severe symptoms and serious illness. Untreated, infections may persist for up to 25–30 years, the lifespan of the parasite."

How Are Liver Flukes Related To Cholangiocarcinoma?

In an article published the VA regarding liver flukes: "People can become infected by eating raw or under-cooked fish that have these parasites. Once eaten, the liver flukes grow to adulthood inside the human biliary duct system. The irritation and scarring caused by liver fluke infection can lead to bile duct cancer." In 2018, the VA launched their own trial, Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study (VE-HEROeS), to investigate service-connection to Cholangiocarcinoma.

Who Is At Risk Of Liver Fluke Infection?

- Residents of Southeast Asian countries
 - *Opisthorchis Verrini*: Thailand, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Vietnam, and Cambodia
 - *Clonorchis sinensis*: Korea and China.
- Service Members Who Have Traveled/Eaten/Drank In These Locations
 - A study conducted by Psevdos, Ford, & Sung-Tae H. (2018) "Screening US Vietnam Veterans for Liver Fluke Exposure 5 Decades After the End of the War" noted a potential connection between Vietnam Era veterans and liver fluke infection. Preuksanapisch et al. (2018) states, "In Western countries, the risk of CCA increases in patients with primary sclerosing cholangitis, whereas liver fluke infection appears to be the major risk factor for CCA in Asian countries."



Why Does This Matter?

CCF Statements: "In many cases the VA will deny service connection and medical coverage because the veteran did not show symptoms in the service or within a year after discharge. The veteran did not have to have symptoms in the service or within a year after discharge for this to be service connected. *In the majority of cases, this cancer is asymptomatic and in most cases takes 30 to 40 years to develop.*"

"Cases brought to the VA for approval for service connection in regard to both liver fluke and herbicide exposure have been granted and approved. In approving these cases, it demonstrates the VA recognizes the connection. Therefore, it should be recognized in all cases."

Sources

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<https://cholangiocarcinoma.org/>