A New Korean Nomenclature for Steatotic Liver Disease

NAFLD Nomenclature Revision Task Force*

*NAFLD Nomenclature Revision Consensus Task Force on behalf of the KASL (Alphabetical order)

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The journey to redefine nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) was driven by the need to replace exclusionary and stigmatizing terminology. For the past several decades, NAFLD and nonalcoholic steatohepatitis have been common nomenclatures in hepatology but were criticized due to the oversight of metabolic dysfunction and concerns about stigmatization. In 2020, the term "metabolic dysfunction-associated fatty liver disease" was proposed to address these issues by focusing on metabolic dysfunction instead of the negative terminology.\(^1\)\(^-\)\(^3\) In late 2021, a coalition of experts from the pan-national liver societies convened to address this issue. Through the modified Delphi method, a consensus was reached to utilize the term steatotic liver disease (SLD) and "metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease" (MASLD) as a specific subtype within the broader category.\(^4\)\(^,\)\(^5\) This change has led to a paradigm shift in the understanding of liver disease, promoting holistic patient care and paving the way for better health outcomes worldwide.\(^6\)\(^,\)\(^7\)

In Korea, a similar initiative was undertaken to echo this change in nomenclature by the Korean Association for the Study of the Liver (KASL).\(^8\)\(^,\)\(^9\) Recognizing the importance of a unified and accurate nomenclature, KASL embarked on a mission to establish new terminology for fatty liver disease and translate it into Korean in December 2023. In February 2024, KASL launched a dedicated task force to address the nomenclature issue. This task force, composed of eight leading Korean experts in hepatology, aimed to create a Korean term that accurately reflects the nature of fatty liver disease while minimizing stigma and improves patient understanding. The task force began by surveying KASL members to gather their opinions on the current terminology and suggestions for the new nomenclature. This comprehensive survey aimed to assess the recognition of existing terms and identify any cultural or linguistic nuances influencing
the new terminology. The survey included questions on whether to emphasize the term "metabolic dysfunction" and if so, what the appropriate Korean and English terms would be. Given that the American Association for the Study of the Liver, and European Association for the Study of the Liver proposed using "steatotic" instead of "fatty", but both terms are translated into an identical term "지방(脂肪)" in Korean, the survey focused on whether to remove "비알코올" (non-alcoholic, 非酒精) and emphasize "대사이상" (metabolic dysfunction, 代謝異常). This was to ensure that the new term accurately conveys the disease's nature without stigmatizing patients. In response to these findings the task force proposed several new terms focusing on descriptors highlighting the metabolic aspect of the disease. After extensive discussions and revisions, the task force converged on the term "대사이상 지방간질환" (metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease, 代謝異常脂肪肝疾患), aligning with the international consensus while ensuring cultural and linguistic relevance. To finalize the new nomenclature, the task force conducted additional rounds of feedback, incorporating input from the 2024 KASL clinical practice guidelines committee for SLD, and KASL board of directors. This iterative process ensured that the new term was scientifically accurate, easy to understand, and stigma-free. The culmination of these efforts was presented at The Liver Week 2024, which took place on June 27, 2024. During this event, the KASL announced its position statement on the new nomenclature for fatty liver disease, including the official Korean terminology. By aligning with the global movement towards a more accurate and inclusive nomenclature, Korea has made significant progress towards enhancing patient care and raising disease awareness. The new Korean term, "대사이상 지방간질환"
(metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease, 代谢異常脂肪肝疾患) reflects a deeper understanding of the disease's metabolic roots and aims to reduce the stigma long associated with “nonalcoholic” and “fatty”. The journey to this new terminology has been a collaborative and thoughtful process, driven by a commitment to improve patient outcomes and foster a more compassionate healthcare environment. We expect our action will have a significant influence on various aspects including the facilitation of novel drug and biomarker developments, reducing stigma for the patients, and the promotion of disease awareness in diverse stakeholders such as the academic societies, government organizations, policy makers, medical industry, and patient groups. As the KASL now adopts this new nomenclature, it stands as a testament to the power of words in shaping our understanding of the disease and the importance of a unified global effort in the fight against liver disease.\textsuperscript{10}


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