

# LUPUS now<sup>®</sup> RESEARCH UPDATE

An eNewsletter from the Lupus Foundation of America, Inc.

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## Issue 10 - October 2007

The **Lupus Now Research Update**, a free eNewsletter from the Lupus Foundation of America, provides reviews of recently published papers from significant medical journals translated into understandable language, information about advances in lupus research and clinical studies, and other relevant news for individuals with an interest in lupus. The commentary aims to put research findings into perspective, explain the limits to the conclusions that can be drawn, and examine the possibilities for future research directions. This is an exciting time in lupus research, so it is important for everyone in the lupus community to be fully informed about ongoing studies and developments and what they might mean.

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### **Early signs of lupus, even before a diagnosis can be made?**

*From Arthritis & Rheumatism, July 2007*

Diagnosing lupus can sometimes be difficult. Because lupus symptoms may come and go and resemble other illnesses, it may take months or even years before a doctor can sort out what is going on. The researchers wanted to find out which symptoms tended to appear early on in most lupus patients and what antibodies might be present before certain clinical symptoms appear. Of the 130 patients studied, 104 had at least one clinical feature present before the diagnosis was made. [Read more >](#)

### **New Symptoms related to neonatal lupus**

*From Arthritis & Rheumatism, March 2007*

Neonatal lupus erythematosus (NLE) is a rare but serious condition that can occur in newborn babies, and is related to anti-Ro (SSA) and/or anti-La (SSB) antibodies, which can cross the placenta in pregnancy from the mother to the fetus. The researchers sought to determine if infants born with NLE were at greater risk for hydrocephalus, a condition characterized by excess spinal fluid in or around the brain, which in turn contributed to macrocephaly, an enlarged head size. The researchers found that the infants born to anti-Ro positive mothers developed hydrocephalus and macrocephaly at higher rates than would be expected. [Read more >](#)

### **Medication use and infertility in men with lupus**

*From Arthritis & Rheumatism, July 2007*

Because lupus can affect almost every organ system in the body, men who develop lupus may have concerns about their fertility, especially since the presence of antisperm antibodies has been observed in a significant percentage of lupus patients. The researchers sought to determine the frequency and possible causes of sperm damage in men with lupus. The researchers found a high frequency of sperm abnormalities in men with lupus, including lower sperm counts and reduced sperm mobility. Both of these conditions are linked to male infertility. [Read more >](#)

### **Particular immune molecules and NPSLE**

*From Arthritis & Rheumatism, April 2007*

Despite the fact that a significant percentage of lupus patients (estimates run from 14% to 75%) have signs of neurological involvement, doctors still don't have a single test that can definitely indicate when lupus is affecting the central nervous system (NPSLE). The researchers sought to determine if the presence of particular factors in the spinal fluid (CSF) of lupus patients are associated with NPSLE, which might help determine NPSLE diagnosis. The researchers found increased concentrations of several inflammatory proteins in the CSF of lupus patients during a flare of NPSLE including interleukin 6 (IL-6) and several other proteins. [Read more >](#)

### **Have you seen a rheumatologist lately?**

*From Arthritis & Rheumatism, May 2007*

Although a number of studies have found that specialty care is associated with improved outcomes, there are reports that certain groups of lupus patients -- especially the elderly and African American women -- often do not have even annual visits with a rheumatologist. That may contribute, in part, to the more severe manifestations of disease seen in African Americans with lupus. The researchers wanted to examine the socioeconomic and/or demographic factors that might affect lupus patient's use of rheumatology physician services. The researchers found that older participants, males, and those with lower incomes were less likely to visit a rheumatologist, even after taking other variables into account such as race/ethnicity, health insurance, and disease status. [Read more >](#)



### **Another benefit of hydroxychloroquine?**

*From Annal of the Rheumatic Diseases, September 2007*

Hydroxychloroquine, also known by its trade name Plaquenil (R), is often prescribed for mild to moderate cases of lupus, and may be effective in preventing skin flares and possibly blood clots. Researchers here in the United States wanted to see if lupus patients from other ethnic backgrounds who were treated with hydroxychloroquine also lived longer. A study recently reported from Spain found that antimalarial drugs not only helped control lupus disease, but patients who took either of these drugs also lived longer than other lupus patients, even when discounting other factors. However, almost all of the patients in that study were Caucasian, so researchers here in the United States wanted to see if lupus patients from other ethnic backgrounds who were treated with hydroxychloroquine also lived longer. Like the previous study in Spain, the researchers in this

LUMINA study found that hydroxychloroquine had a clear effect in terms of the survival of lupus patients. [Read more >](#)



### **LFA Awards \$2 million in research grants to 31 investigators**

The Lupus Foundation of America (LFA) has awarded an additional \$2 million in research grants and fellowships to stimulate important new areas of research to find the causes of and cure for lupus. The LFA has launched a series of bold new research initiatives in the areas of mid-to-late stage translational research, pediatric/adolescent lupus, and lupus in males with funds provided by the [Wallace H. Coulter Foundation](#). The LFA has now supported approximately 400 researchers at nearly 100 academic and medical institutions around the U.S. [Read more >](#)

### **Dr. Jill Buyon to Receive Evelyn V. Hess Research Award**

Jill Buyon, MD, Professor of Medicine and Vice Chair, Department of Rheumatology at the New York University (NYU) School of Medicine, has been selected by her peers to receive the prestigious Evelyn V. Hess Research Award given annually by the Lupus Foundation of America, Inc. (LFA). The award recognizes a lifetime of achievement in lupus research. [Read more >](#)

### **Department of Defense Provides \$5 million for lupus research**

The Department of Defense (DoD) Congressionally Directed Peer Reviewed Medical Research Program (PRMRP) has awarded \$5 million in new funding to support important research studies on lupus and lupus biomarkers. The PRMRP has funded three new grants in 2007 from funds authorized by Congress last year. These projects are in addition to the two projects previously awarded from FY 2005 funds. [Read more >](#)

### **The stars come out for Butterflies Over Hollywood event in Los Angeles**

The Lupus Foundation of America (LFA) and Maybelline, in association with the Will and Jada Smith Family Foundation, hosted the First Annual **Butterflies Over Hollywood** soiree on Saturday, September 29 at the historic El Rey Theatre in Los Angeles. Actress Jada Pinkett Smith headlined a list of more than 300 celebrities and guests who helped raise funds for LFA public and professional education programs, as well as for support services to help individuals with lupus and their families who live in the greater Los Angeles area. [Read more >](#)

### **Partners Help LFA Raise Funds for Lupus Research and Education Programs**

Many companies and organizations are helping the LFA fight lupus by donating all or a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their products to fund research and education programs. Here's a way that you can help yourself and help the cause at the same time. [Read more >](#)



### Next Live Lupus Chat

The next Lupus Live Chat on the LFA Website will be on Wednesday, November 14 at 3:00 p.m. EST on the topic of Aging and Lupus. Dr. Ronenn Roubenoff, Senior Director of Molecular Medicine at Millennium Pharmaceuticals, Inc., will be the guest speaker. [Read more >](#)

### Fall issue of *Lupus Now* (R) magazine offers tips for a living your best life with lupus

Some people find the life they had planned sidelined by a diagnosis of a chronic and debilitating disease. But a great life doesn't have to end with a diagnosis. Many people find their lives can be just as rewarding if they simply start living their "best life." [Read more >](#)

### New LFA Store Opens

The LFA has launched a new store on its Website, [www.lupus.org](http://www.lupus.org) to offer educational publications, promotional and awareness merchandise, and new apparel items. [Check out our new store.](#)

### Lupus Education Symposium November 10 in Boston

The final 2007 education program for individuals with lupus and their families, *Lupus Now: State of the Art Approaches from the Experts*, will be presented on November 10 at the Brigham & Women's Hospital beginning at 1:00 p.m. [Read more >](#)

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### Links of interest

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Please add [info@lupus.org](mailto:info@lupus.org), [advocacy@lupus.org](mailto:advocacy@lupus.org), and [newsletter@lupus.org](mailto:newsletter@lupus.org) to your safe senders list or email address book to ensure that you continue to receive this enewsletter.