

LUPUS now[®] RESEARCH UPDATE

An eNewsletter from the Lupus Foundation of America, Inc.

Joan T. Merrill, MD - Editor • Gary S. Gilkeson, MD - Chair, LFA Medical-Scientific Advisory Council

Issue 11 - December 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.

Joan T. Merrill, M.D., Editor

Head, Clinical Pharmacology, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation

Medical Director, Lupus Foundation of America, Inc.



When Platelet Counts are High

From Journal of Rheumatology, July 2007

The spleen is an important organ in both the body's immune system and its blood circulation. The spleen makes antibodies that protect against infections. The researchers wanted to see if there were specific lupus symptoms that showed up more often in patients whose spleens weren't functioning well. The findings of this study suggested that when lupus patients have high platelet counts, the damage to the spleen could be caused by blood clots related to antiphospholipid antibodies. [Read more >](#)

New Tests for Detecting Lupus Kidney Disease?

From Lupus, and Arthritis & Rheumatism, June 2007

If the kidneys are damaged, they can lose their ability to filter out waste products from the blood and serious health complications can occur. The researchers in this study wanted to know if the presence of specific antibodies in a patient's blood could be linked to the more severe kinds of kidney disease, in particular anti-dsDNA and anti-nucleosome antibodies. After reviewing the findings, the researchers calculated that lupus patients with anti-nucleosome antibodies were seven times more likely to develop lupus nephritis, suggesting that these antibodies could help to identify individuals at risk for this serious complication of lupus. [Read more >](#)

In several previous studies, which did not include people with lupus, it appeared that high levels of

lipocalin-2 in the urine could be an early predictor of kidney damage. The researchers for this study wanted to find out if there was an association between urinary lipocalin-2 and lupus-related kidney disease. The researchers found significantly higher levels of lipocalin-2 in the urine of lupus patients with active kidney disease than in the urine of the other lupus patients or among the healthy controls. [Read more >](#)

As Teenage Girls with Lupus Mature

From Lupus, June-July 2007

Women with lupus may have problems with their menstrual cycle. Early menopause is often the result of treatments for lupus, in particular cyclophosphamide (CYC). This study wanted to see if adolescent females with juvenile lupus were also at risk for these kinds of problems. This research study confirms some earlier studies which suggest that cyclophosphamide is less likely to put younger patients into menopause than older women. [Read more >](#)

There is some research showing that adult women with lupus are at greater risk for abnormalities of the cervix. The researchers for this study wanted to see if this risk also applied to adolescent lupus patients. There was no difference in the number of abnormal PAP smears among the two groups, those with or without lupus; fifty percent of each group had normal results. However, within the group of patients who had lupus, those who had more lupus disease activity were twice as likely to have inflammatory changes in their cervix. [Read more >](#)

Risk Factors for Pneumonia

From Arthritis & Rheumatism, August 2007

Pneumonia is the most common form of lung disease in lupus patients. The researchers for this study wanted to see if they could identify specific risk factors for pneumonia among lupus patients. The researchers found that being male, having had lupus nephritis or leucopenia, and treatment with immunosuppressive drugs were all associated with a higher risk for getting pneumonia, but the strongest association was a specific variation in a gene that plays a role in the production of a molecule called tumor necrosis factor (TNF). [Read more >](#)

Cardiovascular disease activity in lupus -- even during remission?

From Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, July 2007

Lupus patients are at increased risk for cardiovascular disease (CVD), which involves hardening of the arteries and can lead to heart attacks or strokes later in life. People with CVD may have fewer special cells in their blood that help repair damaged blood vessels. This group of researchers wanted to learn if lupus patients had lower levels of these helper cells, even when they were in remission. The findings revealed that the levels of the repair cells were lower in lupus patients leading the researchers to conclude that for some lupus patients, the ability to repair damaged blood vessels may be impaired, even if the patients are in remission and on medication. [Read more >](#)



Drug Development

Clinical Studies of Potential New Therapies Seeking Participants

The BLISS study (Belimumab International SLE Study) is enrolling people with lupus to test an

investigational medicine that is designed to inhibit the activity of B-lymphocyte stimulator, or BLyS (R). In lupus and certain other autoimmune diseases, elevated levels of BLyS are believed to contribute to the production of autoantibodies that attack and destroy the body's own healthy tissues. The study of belimumab is designed for people with systemic lupus. [More information.](#)

The LUNAR (Lupus Nephritis Research) Study will evaluate the safety and the effectiveness of an investigational new drug for lupus nephritis. Study participants must be between the ages of 16 and 75, and have active lupus-related kidney disease. For more detailed information about this study, you can call 1-888-68-LUPUS.

The Anti-IFN Study will evaluate the safety of an investigational new drug for systemic lupus. Study participants must be between the ages of 18 and 65 and have a confirmed diagnosis of systemic lupus. For more detailed information about this study, you can call 1-866-510-0092.

The New York University Medical Center is recruiting for a clinical study on the use of preventative intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) therapy for congenital heart block in neonatal lupus. The aim of this study is to determine whether treating the pregnant mother with intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) will prevent the development of congenital heart block (CHB). [More information.](#)