COMPARISON OF DIFFERENTIAL AGGLUTINATION TITRE (D.A.T.) IN JUVENILE AND ADULT RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

BY

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In the preceding paper (Bywaters, Carter, and Scott, 1959), it was shown that the Rose-Waaler test (positive in about 50 to 70 per cent. of adult rheumatoid arthritis cases) is frequently negative in childhood arthritis (Still's disease). This has also been remarked by others (Pike, Sulkin, and Coggleshall, 1955; Alexander and de Forest, 1954; Ziff, 1957), although by the inhibition technique 95·8 per cent. are positive (McEwen, Ziff, Carmel, Di Tata, and Tanner, 1958).

This raises the possibility that Still's disease is different from the rheumatoid arthritis seen typically in adults, as Still (1897) originally postulated. To provide further data pertinent to this, we have estimated the Rose-Waaler titre over a period of several years in a series of over 200 children and this report compares the titre in 142 juvenile cases followed for a minimum of 4 years with an adult group of rheumatoid arthritis patients. All sera were tested by one of us (F.E.T.S.) by the method described in the previous paper (Bywaters and others, 1959).

Material

The juvenile series of 142 patients is defined in the preceding paper. The adult series consists of 140 patients followed for at least 4 years, ninety from Hammersmith Hospital and fifty from Taplow, who fulfil the same criteria as those used for the juvenile group; four patients had less than four joints involved; three had three joints involved, and one had one joint only involved, but diagnosis was confirmed by synovial biopsy in these four cases.

The adults are thus comparable with the juvenile series except that single or infrequent Rose tests were performed. This difference is of no importance in analysing all tests according to decade (Figs 1 and 2), but would affect a comparison of patients according to decade, taking the Taplow juvenile and adult group together by decade at onset. For this reason, in tabulations subsequent to Figs 1 and 2, only the result of the first D.A.T. is taken into account.

However, for the purpose of comparing the D.A.T. titres at various decades, we could not include the ninety Hammersmith adults reported as positive or negative only, and there were thus too few adults in some of the decade groups. Thus, for Figs 1 and 2, 21 adults from Taplow were added (making a total of 71 adults and 142 children). These 21 patients were similar to the larger group of fifty Taplow adults except that they had not been followed for 4 years. They could not therefore be used for correlation of clinical phenomena shown over a 4-year period with the first D.A.T., which is the subject of Tables III and IV, and Figs 3, 4, and 5.

The functional state of the patient is graded from I to V:

Grade I Helpless
II Chair/bed existence
III Moderate limitation of function
IV Slight limitation of function
V No limitation of function

Results

Table I (overleaf) compares the juvenile and adult cases in regard to sex, interval between onset and admission to hospital, and result of first Rose-Waaler test. Females preponderate in the adult series and juvenile rheumatoid arthritis is less frequently sero-positive.

Fig. 1 (overleaf) shows a progressive increase in positive D.A.T. results with lateness of onset, whatever definition of "positivity" is adopted. The most valid curve is the dotted line which shows only the result of the first test performed.
## TABLE I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No. of Patients</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>First Examined</th>
<th>Patients with D.A.T. Positive at First Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>&quot;Late&quot; &gt;1 yr from Onset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NUMBER OF PATIENTS IN EACH DECADE OF ONSET

![Graph showing correlation of D.A.T. results with age at onset, taking four levels of "positivity".](grafico.png)

**Fig. I.**—Correlation of D.A.T. results with age at onset, taking four levels of "positivity".
Fig. 2 shows the percentage distribution by titre of all estimations done on patients in each decade.

It will be seen that there is a progressive increase in the frequency of high titres with age. The reciprocal of the mean (logarithmic) titre at each decade ("M.R." on the graph) also shows a progressive rise apart from two points. The number of patients in each decade is the same as in Fig. 1. The numbers of patients in each decade and the D.A.T. results given in Table II apply to all the subsequent Figures and Tables.

Since a rash is one of the more prominent features of the juvenile disease (Isdale and Bywaters, 1956) and nodules are more prominent in older patients (Bywaters, Glynn, and Zeldis, 1958), we have studied these two features, together with the improvement in functional state over the 4 years, as reflecting prognosis.

Fig. 3 (overleaf) shows the percentage of D.A.T. positive and D.A.T. negative patients in each decade, who showed a rash. The total percentage of patients with a rash in each decade is indicated by the dotted line. The incidence of rash falls rapidly with age, and there is no correlation with the D.A.T. response.

Fig. 4 (overleaf) similarly shows the percentage of all D.A.T. positive patients and of all D.A.T. negative patients in each decade who showed nodules. It will be seen that at each decade a higher proportion of the D.A.T. positive group than of the D.A.T. negative group had nodules. The total percentage of patients with nodules in each decade is indicated by the dotted line. The incidence of nodules increases with age.

**Table II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decades</th>
<th>0-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50-59</th>
<th>60+:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. in Each Decade</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First D.A.T. Positive (1:16 or More)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prognosis.**—This appears better in the young, because almost 88 per cent. improved over the 4-year period as against 50 per cent. in adults. Tables III and IV (overleaf) show the details of improvement or deterioration of 136 "early" patients out of the total 282, divided into four age groups at onset, and also compares sero-positive (at least one positive D.A.T.) with sero-negative patients. The mean functional status when first seen and at the fourth follow-up is given for the various age groups.
There is little difference in prognosis between the "positive" and "negative" groups.

Fig. 5 (opposite) illustrates the reason for the apparently greater improvement of the juvenile group. When first seen, those in the younger decades had a low functional status and improved a great deal during the 4 years. Those in the older decades started with a higher functional level and achieved almost the same functional state at the fourth year.

The reason for the marked difference in functional status when first seen between juveniles and adults may be due to the fact that most adults have responsibilities, either in employment or in looking after a home and family, and therefore keep active longer; children, on the other hand, are nearly
always put to bed when the early signs of illness appear. Our experience in this Unit has been that prolonged rest and immobilization, particularly in children, reduces them to a condition of stiffness and eventual ankylosis, with a consequent low functional state.

Summary

140 adult patients with rheumatoid arthritis were compared with the 142 juvenile patients used for the study described in the previous paper (Bywaters, Carter, and Scott, 1959). Both groups were comparable as regards criteria and duration of follow-up, but fewer D.A.T.s were done in the adult group; therefore only the first D.A.T. was used for comparison between the two groups of patients. A partially different group of adults (71) was used in compiling Figs 1 and 2, which show that the D.A.T. becomes progressively positive with greater age at onset, and that there is a progressive increase in the frequency of high titres with age. A marked difference is seen in the D.A.T. response of the adult and juvenile group, 50 per cent. of adults being sero-positive on first testing compared with 13.4 per cent. of juveniles. A progressive change with age in D.A.T. response and incidence of rash and nodules is also seen.

Improvement is more marked in the young, because children tend to start at a lower functional grade than adults. There is no significant difference in prognosis between the sero-positive and sero-negative groups in either children or adults.

Since there is progressive change with age in the clinical features here investigated, we conclude that there is not yet sufficient evidence to justify the view that rheumatoid arthritis and Still's disease are
separate diseases. It is suggested that the differences are due to age alone.

We are most grateful to Dr. E. Lewis-Faning for his detailed criticisms and suggestions in regard to the presentation of these results.

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Comparaison des titres d’agglutination différentielle (D.A.T.) dans l’arthrite rhumatismale juvénile et adulte

SUMÁRIO

Se compararon 140 casos de artritis reumatoide adulta con 142 casos juveniles, objetos de un trabajo anterior (Bywaters, Carter y Scott, 1959). Ambos grupos se parecen respecto a los criterios diagnósticos y al período de observación, pero el D.A.T. fue determinado con menos frecuencia en los adultos; por esta razón, para comparar los grupos entre sí, se tomó sólo la primera determinación. Se escogió un grupo parcialmente diferente de adultos (71) para conponer las Figs. 1 y 2, revelando que la positividad de D.A.T. aumenta en frecuencia con la edad de comienzo de la enfermedad y que sus cifras tienden a subir con la edad del enfermo. Se notó una diferencia marcada en la D.A.T. entre los dos grupos, un 50% de los adultos y sólo un 13,4% de los jóvenes siendo sero-positivos a la primera determinación. Se observaron también alteraciones progresivas, según la edad, de la D.A.T. y de la frecuencia de exantemis y de nódulos.

Mejorías fueron más acentuados en los jóvenes, ya que niños tienden a empezar con un grado funcional más bajo que los adultos. No hubo diferencia pronóstica significativa entre los grupos sero-positivos y los sero-negativos tanto jóvenes como adultos.

En vista de las alteraciones progresivas de los rasgos clínicos con la edad, observadas en este trabajo, se concluye que no hay datos suficientes para justificar la hipótesis, que la artritis reumatoide y la enfermedad de Still sean enfermedades separadas. Se sugiere que las diferencias notadas se deberían sólo a la edad.
Comparison of Differential Agglutination Titre (D.A.T.) in Juvenile and Adult Rheumatoid Arthritis

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*Ann Rheum Dis* 1959 18: 233-238
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and claims that the results were excellent in 73 per cent.,
good in 17 per cent., and poor in 10 per cent. 
[This paper fails to convince. In tennis elbow, for
example, which falls within the definition of trigger-
point phenomenon, pain can also be elicited by putting
the forearm extensors into tension; moreover, in a
proportion of such cases (especially if the trouble is
bilateral) in spite of local signs and symptoms the ultimate
cause is found to lie in the cervical spine.]

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The incidence of rheumatism in a sample of 117 male
and 228 female cotton workers aged 45 and over was
compared with the incidence in a similar number of
control subjects who had never worked in cotton and
who were randomly selected from an urban and rural
population. More of the control subjects (89 per cent.
of males and 85 per cent. of females) than of the cotton
workers (73 and 74 per cent. respectively) gave a history
of symptoms of rheumatism and of loss of work because
of rheumatism. On the other hand the male cotton
workers had more severe osteoarthrosis in the finger
and thumb joints than the controls, as assessed by radiog-
raphy; it is suggested that this may be due to continu-
ous minor traumata. The authors conclude that "in
view of the relatively benign nature of the disease found
in cotton operatives, preventive measures are not indicated".

John Pemberton.

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CORRIGENDUM

In the paper entitled “Comparison of Differential Agglutination Titre (D.A.T.) in Juvenile and Adult Rheumatoid
Arthritis”, by E. G. L. Bywaters, Mary E. Carter, and F. E. T. Scott (Ann. rheum. Dis., 1959, 18, 233), the following
correction should be made to Table III, p. 236:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age at Onset (decade)</th>
<th>0-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-49</th>
<th>50+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Change in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unchanged</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total . . .</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bold numerals have been corrected.