Anti-C1q antibodies in renal and non-renal SLE

We read with interest the report of Marto et al on the occurrence of anti-C1q antibodies in systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), particularly their finding of anti-C1q in 39.8% of patients with SLE without renal disease, 27.3% of whom went on to develop nephritis.

We recently tested for anti-C1q antibodies using an enzyme linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) kit (Buhllmann Laboratories, Basel) in the sera of 28 patients with SLE (median 13.2 U/l (range 0.6-1516)), 14 patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA; 12.6 (2-119.6)), and 13 healthy control subjects (5.4 (3-137.2)). Although just over 40% of patients with SLE and RA had anti-C1q levels above the manufacturer’s cut off point for positivity, 18.2 U/l, only patients with SLE had levels over 200 U/l.

While we agree with Marto’s findings of a correlation between renal disease and anti-C1q positivity in patients with SLE (r = 0.56, p < 0.05 in our study), we also found a correlation between haematological disease and anti-C1q positivity (r = 0.65, p<0.05), and particularly, a negative correlation between lymphocyte count and anti-C1q concentration (r = -0.55, p<0.05).

Increased numbers of circulating apoptotic lymphocytes have been described in SLE,1 and linked with lymphopenia and disease activity. As Marto and colleagues argue, interference with clearance of apoptotic cells is now an attractive hypothesis for the development of autoimmunity.2 Interference of anti-C1q with the removal of the increased numbers of apoptotic lymphocytes in these lymphopenic patients might result in the exposure of antigenic nuclear material to the immune system, and so contribute to the development of autoantibodies. Although almost all studies on anti-C1q antibodies have been directed at lupus nephritis, a larger study might be useful in examining possible relationships with other forms of the disease, including haematological manifestations.

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PostScript

Matters Arising

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References


The author name P-P Tak is incorrect in the list of authors. The correct name is P P Tak.

Corrections printed in the journal also appear on the Annals website http://www.annrheumdis.com and are linked to the original publication

Forthcoming Events

Second EULAR Course on Systemic Lupus Erythematosus
4–9 September 2005; San Miniato, Italy
This course for 70 young rheumatologists (age <40) has been designed to provide comprehensive, intensive training on various aspects of this disease. It will deal with the following topics:

- Treatment of SLE, molecular basis of drug action, and pharmacogenetics
- Evaluation of patients with SLE: disease activity, damage, response to treatment
- Renal disease in SLE
- Neurological disease in SLE
- Skin disease in SLE
- Particular problems in SLE: fever, vaccination, pregnancy, haematological manifestations

Contact: Organising secretariat: c/o Clinical and Experimental Rheumatology, Via Santa Maria 31, I-56126 Pisa, Italy.
Tel.: +39-050-40124
Fax: +39-050-502299
Email: silecours@clinexphrmatol.org

Third International Conference on Neuroendocrine Immune Basis of the Rheumatic Diseases
10–12 September 2005; Genova-Santa Margherita, Italy
Topic: The clinical translation of the neuroendocrine immune mechanisms of the rheumatic diseases for a better understanding and management of their diagnosis and treatment.
Local organiser: Professor Maurizio Cutolo, Division of Rheumatology, DIMI, University of Genova, Italy
Email: mcutolo@unige.it
Contact: Organising secretariat: Michela Civelli, EDRA spa, Viale Monza , 133 20125, Milan, Italy
Tel: +39 (0)2 281 72300
Fax: +39 (0)2 281 72399
Email: 3rdmci@edraspa.it

XI Mediterranean Congress of Rheumatology
22–24 September 2005; Heraklion Crete, Greece
The meeting is organised by the Departments of Medicine, Rheumatology, and Clinical Immunology and Allergy, University of Crete.
Contact: Organising Bureau (secretariat and travel office) of the Mediterranean Congress of Rheumatology
Tel: 00 30 210 9249836
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Email: nickolopoulou@amphirion.gr

Future EULAR congresses
21–24 June 2006; EULAR 2006; Amsterdam, The Netherlands
13–16 June 2007; EULAR 2007; Barcelona, Spain
11–14 June 2008; EULAR 2008; Paris, France

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