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Press Release

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE until October 16, 2014 – 5:00 PM (ET)

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BLOOD TEST HELPS PREDICT RELAPSE IN PATIENTS WITH AUTOIMMUNE DISEASE AFFECTING THE KIDNEYS

Test could help prevent kidney failure

Highlights

- Among patients with an autoimmune disease called ANCA-associated vasculitis, autoantibody increases were linked with an 11-fold increased risk of relapse in patients whose kidneys were affected.
- Among patients without kidney involvement, such increases were associated only weakly with relapses.

Patients with ANCA-associated vasculitis produce antibodies that damage blood vessels in the body.

Washington, DC (October 16, 2014) — In patients with an autoimmune disease that often involves the kidneys, monitoring the blood for autoantibodies may help doctors predict the chance of relapse. The findings are from a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* (JASN). Such measures may help protect patients' kidney health.

Patients with an autoimmune disorder called anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic antibody (ANCA)-associated vasculitis produce antibodies that damage blood vessels in the body. Relapses of the disorder can cause severe and permanent damage to organs and other parts of the body. Jan Willem Cohen Tervaert, MD, PhD, Michael Kemna (Maastricht University, The Netherlands), and their colleagues wondered whether blood levels of ANCA autoantibodies could be used to predict a patient's risk of relapse.

The researchers followed 166 patients with ANCA-associated vasculitis, 104 of whom had kidney problems associated with their disease and 62 of whom did not. During an average follow-up of 49 months and 18 ANCA measurements, 89 ANCA increases and 74 relapses were recorded. Among patients with kidney involvement, ANCA increases were linked with an 11-fold increased risk of relapse. Among patients without kidney involvement, ANCA increases were associated only weakly with relapses.

“By measuring ANCA levels in patients with kidney involvement, doctors can predict which patients are going to relapse. It is expected that by using ANCAs as a guideline, severe relapses necessitating dialysis can be prevented,” said Dr. Tervaert.

In an accompanying editorial, Ulrich Specks, MD (Mayo Clinic) noted that single-center studies like this one “provide useful information that hones our awareness of the different performance of biomarkers in different patient populations, and such observations warrant validation in similar cohorts.”

Study co-authors include Jan Damoiseaux, PhD, Jos Austen, Bjorn Winkens, PhD, Jim Peters, and Pieter van Paassen, MD, PhD.

Disclosures: The authors reported no financial disclosures.

The article, entitled “ANCA as a Predictor of Relapse: Useful in Patients with Renal Involvement But Not in Patients with Nonrenal Disease,” will appear online at http://jasn.asnjournals.org/ on October 16, 2014.

The editorial, entitled “Accurate Relapse Prediction in ANCA-Associated Vasculitis–the Search for the Holy Grail,” will appear online at http://jasn.asnjournals.org/ on October 16, 2014.

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Founded in 1966, and with more than 14,000 members, the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) leads the fight against kidney disease by educating health professionals, sharing new knowledge, advancing research, and advocating the highest quality care for patients.

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