

Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients May Have Increased Risk of Developing Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Study Finds

Researchers emphasize the importance of controlling inflammation and vigilantly watching for early symptoms of COPD

October 19, 2017 (Vancouver, BC) – A new study reveals that individuals living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) have an increased risk of developing a lung disease called Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

The study was conducted by a research team led by Dr. Diane Lacaille, MD, FRCPC, MHSc, at Arthritis Research Canada and the University of British Columbia. The research team examined information on almost 25,000 British Columbians who were diagnosed with RA between 1996 and 2006, and compared it to a control group within the general population.

Results indicated that RA patients have a 47% greater risk of getting diagnosed with COPD—likely due to chronic inflammation, a key feature of RA.

“Our findings emphasize the need to control inflammation, and in fact to aim for complete eradication of inflammation (i.e. remission), through effective treatment of the RA disease,” states Dr. Lacaille.

Since the link between inflammation and COPD has only recently been found, clinicians may not be aware that RA patients are at risk. Dr. Lacaille stresses the need for both clinicians and patients to be conscious of the risk and be vigilant about watching for early symptoms of COPD. “That way, appropriate tests can be administered to diagnose COPD early, at the onset of symptoms, so that effective treatments for COPD can be initiated before irreversible damage to the lungs occurs,” Dr. Lacaille explains.

Dr. Lacaille also emphasizes that clinicians need to address COPD risk factors, such as smoking, in people living with RA.

- 30 -

About ARTHRITIS RESEARCH CANADA:

Arthritis Research Canada is the largest clinical arthritis research centre in North America. Our mission is to transform the lives of people living with arthritis through research and engagement. Led by world-renowned rheumatologist, Dr. John Esdaile, ARC's scientific team of 70 are creating a future where people living with arthritis are empowered to triumph over pain

and disability. Each of the three centres in BC, Alberta and Quebec are leading research in arthritis prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and quality of life issues.

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