Title: Diagnostic and clinical value of anti-cyclic citrullinated peptide antibodies compared with rheumatoid factor isotypes in rheumatoid arthritis

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Plain Language Summary:

Rheumatoid Arthritis (often called ‘RA’), is a disease that can cause painful, swollen joints. Sometimes, people have muscle aches and a general feeling of tiredness that won’t go away. The joints often feel really stiff, especially in the morning. RA can affect any joint, including elbows, knees, and knuckles. In RA, the body’s immune system starts attacking the joints. The immune system usually keeps us from getting sick by fighting off viruses and bacteria. Sometimes, though, it gets confused and starts to attack parts of our bodies instead of the "bad guys" like the flu.

This attack causes the joints to swell, and can cause deformity. RA can make it hard to do the things you used to do, like writing and even buttoning shirts. These changes can often get in the way of enjoying daily activities, such as gardening and cooking. There is no cure for RA, but with the help of treatments like prescription medications and lifestyle changes, people with RA can lead happy, productive lives. Anyone can be affected by RA, from teenagers to older people.

Unlike a lot of other diseases, figuring out if you have RA can be tricky. It can be hard for you and your doctor to figure out the cause of your arthritis. In particular, the blood tests currently used, the "rheumatoid factor" or "RF" tests, aren't very good at picking up the disease early on. These RF tests look for signs that the immune system is attacking the joints. A new test, "CCP", can be done at the same time your doctor or nurse takes a blood sample for the RF tests. The CCP test is very similar to the RF test; it's also looking for an immune reaction that's hurting the joints. Just like a weather man needs lots of tools to predict the weather, like satellites and balloons, your doctor sometimes needs to use several different tools to get a clearer picture of what's going on in your body. The CCP test can be better at picking up the disease earlier in its course. It can also show the amount of damage that is going on in the joint.

It can be hard and a little scary to learn that you have RA. New drugs are making it easier to slow the damage in the joints down, which means that people with RA can continue doing the activities they love much longer than they could before treatment. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you have any questions.

Additional Resources:

Please provide a limited number of quality resources that you think would be of value to patients and their families.

- “Rheumatoid Arthritis”. MayoClinic.com, 1 July 1, 2011.
Key Words:
Rheumatoid arthritis, CCP, citrullinated, diagnostic value.