Multiple Sclerosis Directory

Human Herpes Virus-6 In The DNA Of Patients With Multiple Sclerosis

Acta Neurologica Scandinavica 2002 Vol 105 No 2. "Prevalence of herpesvirus DNA in MS patients and healthy blood donors"

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By Veronica Rose

Human herpes virus-6 is the only member of the Herpesviridae to show prevalence in the DNA of patients with multiple sclerosis and treatment with b-interferon has no effect on this prevalence.

This conclusion followed a study to determine the prevalence in the DNA of various members of the Herpesviridae among patients with multiple sclerosis treated at the Hospital Clínico San Carlos in Madrid. Furthermore they questioned the likely effects of b-interferon therapy on such prevalence.

Researchers studied the DNA of the peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) in 204 whole blood samples, using a nested polymerase chain reaction (PCR) assay. Samples were taken from 102 patients with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis (MS), - 62 were given b-interferon. The remaining 102 healthy blood donors were controls.

The investigators were only able to identify a statistically significant difference for human herpes virus type -6 (HHV-6) DNA prevalence (P=0.0001). However, they established that the frequency of HHV-6 in patients with multiple sclerosis was 2.26 higher than among healthy donors. No difference was seen in the prevalence of HHV-6 between patients regardless of whether they did, or did not receive b-interferon therapy.

They concluded by questioning whether the human herpes virus -6 is involved in the pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis. Alternatively, researchers ask whether it merely indicates that multiple sclerosis influences latency or reactivation of HHV-6 without this particular virus being directly involved in the disease process of MS?

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