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Perspective

Significance of Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS) Characteristics and Consequences

Lu Zhao*

Department of Molecular Vaccinology and Molecular Diagnostics, University of Xiamen, Xiamen, China

DESCRIPTION

Blood clots recur often in people with Antiphospholipid Syndrome (APS), a rare autoimmune condition. Anybody's blood artery has the potential to develop a blood clot. Depending on the exact location of a blood clot and the organ system involved, the specific symptoms and severity of APS vary widely from person to person. APS can manifest either alone (as primary antiphospholipid syndrome) or in conjunction with another autoimmune condition, such as systemic lupus erythematosus (secondary antiphospholipid syndrome).

Antiphospholipid antibodies are present in the body, which is a defining feature of APS. The body's immune system creates antibodies, which are specialized proteins, to fight infection. Certain antibodies incorrectly target healthy tissue in APS patients. In APS, specific proteins that attach to phospholipids, fat molecules involved in the correct operation of cell membranes, are mistakenly attacked by antibodies. Throughout the body, phospholipids can be found. It is unknown why these antibodies target these proteins and how they induce blood clots to develop.

Symptoms and signs

Blood clot presence and location are related to the specific symptoms of antiphospholipid syndrome. Any blood vessel in the body is capable of developing blood clots. Blood arteries that send blood to the heart are twice as likely to develop clots as blood veins that carry blood away from the heart. Any bodily organ system has the potential to get involved. The brain, lungs, and lower limbs are most frequently damaged. Significant pregnancy-related difficulties are also brought on by APS.

A very rare variant of APS causes many blood clots to form throughout the body, whereas minor blood clots that cause little difficulties are more severe. Blood clots, however, often only form at one place. Blood clots that block the flow of blood to the brain can cause a number of problems, including dangerous ones like transient ischemic attacks or stroke-like events. Seizures, odd shaking, and uncontrollable muscle movements can happen less frequently.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) is the name for blood clots that form in large, deep veins. The legs are the most typical location for DVT, and they can experience swelling and pain. In some circumstances, a fragment of the blood clot may separate, enter the bloodstream, and lodge in the lungs. The medical term for this is pulmonary embolism. Breathlessness, an unexpected discomfort in the chest, tiredness, high blood pressure in the pulmonary arteries, and abrupt death can all be symptoms of pulmonary embolism.

People with APS may develop skin rashes and other skin conditions. These include livedo reticularis, which is characterized by blotchy reddish patches of discolored skin. Leg sores can occasionally develop. Loss of live tissue, particularly in the fingers or toes, can result from inadequate blood flow to the extremities.

Causes

An autoimmune condition known as antiphospholipid syndrome lacks a known cause. When the body's natural defenses against invasive germs assault perfectly healthy tissue, autoimmune diseases result. The development of APS is thought to be influenced by a variety of factors, including genetic and environmental ones. Rarely, APS has been found to run in families, indicating that there may be a hereditary predisposition to acquiring the illness.

Antiphospholipid antibodies are the type of antibodies found in APS. Phospholipids, fatty molecules that are a typical component of cell membranes throughout the body, were initially believed to be the target of these antibodies. The majority of these antibodies, according to experts, target blood proteins that bind to phospholipids. Beta-2-glycoprotein I and prothrombin are the two most often impacted proteins. It is unknown exactly how these antiphospholipid antibodies ultimately result in the formation of blood clots.

Correspondence to: Lu Zhao, Department of Molecular Vaccinology and Molecular Diagnostics, University of Xiamen, Xiamen, China, E-mail: luzhao@gmail.com

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Diagnosis

Antiphospholipid syndrome is diagnosed after a careful clinical examination, a full review of the patient's medical history, the identification of any distinctive physical symptoms, and a number of tests, including straightforward blood testing.

Anti-beta-2-glycoprotein antibody immunoassays, anticardiolipin antibody immunoassays, and lupus anticoagulant tests are the most frequently utilized blood tests to identify antiphospholipid antibodies. Positive tests should be run again since antiphospholipid antibodies can occasionally appear for unrelated causes including infection or drug use. Tests that were previously borderline negative for the antiphospholipid antibodies may need to be redone in APS patients.