

Women and Lupus: The Gendered Nature of Systemic Lupus Erythematosus

Tomas Rother*

Department of Nephrology, Radboud University Medical Center, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

DESCRIPTION

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects multiple organs, leading to a wide range of symptoms from skin rashes to kidney failure. While lupus can affect individuals of all genders, its impact is disproportionately greater in women, particularly those of reproductive age. This gender disparity has raised important questions about the underlying biological, genetic and hormonal factors that contribute to the higher prevalence and more severe disease course in women. Analyzing the gendered nature of lupus is important for advancing both diagnosis and treatment strategies tailored to the specific needs of female patients.

Biological and genetic factors

Beyond hormones, genetic factors also contribute to the gender disparity in lupus. Study indicates that certain genetic variants related to immune function are more prevalent in women, possibly increasing susceptibility to autoimmune diseases. The second X chromosome in women is thought to play a role in immune system regulation. It has been suggested that the presence of two X chromosomes may contribute to an overactive immune response in women, increasing the likelihood of autoimmune diseases like lupus.

Additionally, specific genes involved in immune responses, such as the *TLR7* gene, which plays a role in recognizing foreign pathogens, are more commonly expressed in women. These genetic predispositions may make women more vulnerable to the self-attacking immune responses that characterize lupus.

Hormonal influence

The connection between hormones and lupus is well-documented. Estrogen, in particular, is believed to influence the immune system in a way that promotes the development of autoimmune diseases. This effect is particularly evident in lupus, where the disease often worsens during puberty, pregnancy and menopause periods marked by significant hormonal shifts.

For example, many women experience lupus flares during pregnancy, although some may also experience a period of remission. Similarly, the onset of menopause can lead to disease improvement or worsening, depending on individual hormonal changes.

In contrast, men typically develop lupus later in life and often experience a more severe course of disease. However, this discrepancy may be related to the fact that men are generally diagnosed with lupus at an older age and tend to have a different set of genetic markers that influence their disease course.

Social and psychological implications

The gendered nature of lupus also extends beyond biological factors to encompass social and psychological dimensions. Women with lupus often face unique challenges due to the disease's impact on fertility, pregnancy and reproductive health. Many women with lupus experience difficulty with conception, while those who do become pregnant are at higher risk for complications, including preterm birth, preeclampsia and lupus flares. These issues can create emotional and psychological burdens, as patients must navigate the physical, mental and emotional impacts of living with a chronic illness that affects their reproductive life.

Moreover, lupus is often invisible, which can make it difficult for others to understand the severity of the disease. This lack of recognition may lead to social isolation or misperceptions of the condition, adding additional stress for women already grappling with the physical and emotional challenges of lupus.

CONCLUSION

In the gendered nature of systemic lupus erythematosus is a multifaceted issue, influenced by biological, genetic and hormonal factors. Women are disproportionately affected by lupus, particularly during their reproductive years and the disease's course is often exacerbated by hormonal fluctuations. The presence of two X chromosomes in women, along with specific

Correspondence to: Tomas Rother, Department of Nephrology, Radboud University Medical Center, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, E-mail: tomas.rother@radboudumc.nl

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genetic predispositions, makes them more susceptible to autoimmune conditions like lupus. Additionally, the impact of lupus on fertility and reproductive health adds a unique layer of complexity to the disease for women, further influencing their psychological well-being. As study continues to evolve, it is essential to further investigate the complex interplay of genetic,

hormonal and environmental factors that contribute to the gender disparities observed in lupus. This analyzed will be pivotal in developing gender-specific diagnostic and treatment strategies that account for the unique challenges faced by women with lupus, ultimately improving their quality of life and disease outcomes.