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Tobacco abuse worsening outcome in neuromyelitis optica

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Neuromyelitis optica (NMO) is a severe inflammatory autoimmune disease of the central nervous system characterized by spinal cord and optic nerve involvement. NMO is distinct from MS and its clinical course is typically characterized by exacerbations and remissions without a progressive course. The treatment of NMO has focused on immunosuppression either acutely with steroids or longer-term with chemotherapeutic agents or disease modifying therapies used in MS. We have done an analysis of 7 patients diagnosed with NMO followed by EDSS scores over a 24 month period of time and looked at comorbid conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, alcohol and tobacco use. 3 out of the 7 patients were smokers, the smoking group started off with higher EDSS scores (3.5) compared to the non-smoking group (2.5) and over a 24 month period of time had a greater decline in their EDSS scores (smoking group - 5.5 and non-smoking group - 3.0). Other factors did not appear to correlate significantly to EDSS scores initially or at the end of the 24 month period. This finding raises the possibility of reducing exacerbations and worsening in the clinical course of NMO patients by using smoking cessation strategies. Further studies are required to confirm the positive impact of smoking cessation on this group of patients.

Biography

Ashnaa Rao holds an Undergraduate Degree from Johns Hopkins University and will be completing her Master's in May, 2018 from the Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland. She has published several articles and is currently participating in several research clinical studies in the field of Neurology including a large multicenter study on frontotemporal dementia.

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