Serum gamma-glutamyltransferase and alkaline phosphate in rheumatoid arthritis

The paper by Spooner and colleagues in the June issue prompts us to record our own observations on patients with rheumatoid arthritis. In a consecutive series of 46 patients (34 females, 12 males), all with positive serology, serum gamma-glutamyltransferase (GGT) activity was increased in eight patients (17%) and alkaline phosphatase (AP) in six (13%). This incidence of raised GGT is slightly lower than that found by Spooner et al, whereas the incidence of raised AP is much less.

On all patients showing raised serum enzyme activity we carried out isoenzyme examination by electrophoresis. GGT-2 was the principal GGT isoenzyme in six of the eight patients showing raised GGT activity, GGT-3 was present in all, and markedly increased in three. This pattern is typical of, but not exclusive to, patients with liver disease, and is especially found with intrahepatic cholestasis. In all six patients with increased total AP activity there was increased activity of the liver AP isoenzyme. In four of these, this was accompanied by increased "biliary" isoenzyme, and in one by additional increase of the bone isoenzyme.

Our studies indicate that in patients with rheumatoid arthritis showing raised activities of GGT or AP, this is likely to be of hepatic origin.

Sidney B Rosalki
A Ying Foo
Peter A Tanner

References


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S B Rosalki, A Y Foo and P A Tanner

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