

Medical Update Memo

July 6, 2009

Age of onset in concordant twins and other relative pairs with multiple sclerosis

Summary

Canadian geneticist Dr . Dessa Sadovnick ,from the University of British Columbia, and colleagues report on relationship between families with multiple members with MS and age at onset. **Am J Epidemiol. 2009 Jun 22. [Epub ahead of print]**

Details

Genes and environment seem to have an important role in the development of MS. Besides, the age of onset of MS may vary enormously amongst subjects and might have prognostic value. The authors of this article studied a large number of families where more than one family member had MS, in order to investigate how the percentage of genetic sharing may influence in the age of onset of the disease. Their results suggested that the higher the percentage of genetic sharing (i.e. twins), the more similar the age of onset of MS between the two members of the family. However, as identical (monozygotic) and non-identical (dizygotic) twins had similar behavior in the concordance of age of onset, an effect of intrauterine hormonal environment was suggested. They also found that half-siblings from the same mother had more similar ages of onset of MS than half-siblings from the same father. This study may help us to better understand the complexity of this disease, though further studies are needed.

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