Collaboration on Sjögren's and Lymphoma Research
A Sjögren’s Syndrome Foundation Scientific Workshop

The Sjögren’s Syndrome Foundation’s basic scientific workshop, *Sjögren’s Syndrome: Transition from Autoimmunity to Lymphoma*, took place September 23 – 25, 2005, at the Johns Hopkins University Mt. Washington Conference Center in Baltimore Maryland and was a tremendous success, catalyzing enthusiastic and interactive participation. This workshop included 65 participants from the U. S. and other countries such as Japan, France, Germany, Austria, Norway, Sweden, and England, and brought together experts from a variety of related field, including researchers in immunology, autoimmunity, and oncology, many of whom had not previously focused on Sjögren’s syndrome.

About 5-10% of those with Sjögren’s syndrome, one of the most common autoimmune disorders, develop lymphoma, specifically non-Hodgkin’s B-cell lymphoma enriched for the histopathologic type classified as MALT, or mucosa-associated lymphoma. Scientists believe that a combination of factors contributes to the crossover from autoimmunity to lymphoma and emphasize the need for better understanding of each of these factors as well as their impact on one another. For this reason, international experts from a number of disciplines were brought together to discuss their most recent discoveries in the potential role on the emergence and treatment of lymphoma in Sjögren’s of such burgeoning areas as: B- and T-cell mechanisms; B-Lymphocyte Stimulator (BLyS); genetics; programmed cell death; signaling pathways transcription factors of the Runt-domain family; breaks or checkpoints in the control of immune response and cell proliferation in which lymphoproliferation might transform into a malignancy; and definition of new directions, future research initiatives, areas for collaboration, and registries.

**Key goals were accomplished, including:**
- Bringing together participants who had not previously focused on Sjögren’s syndrome or come together for exchange of data or rigorous discussion on this topic
- Presenting new data

How This Conference Relates to Patients
by Joan Manny, RN

I was fortunate as a Sjögren’s syndrome patient and former RN with the NIH Sjögren’s Syndrome Clinic to take part in the SSF workshop, “Sjögren’s syndrome: Transition from Autoimmunity to Lymphoma” this fall. I was impressed that the SSF was tackling such a critical issue for patients and one from which we can learn so much more about the immune system and how it functions, or dysfunctions, in Sjögren’s syndrome. The Lymphoma workshop was unique in the way it brought together some of the leading researchers of lymphoma but not necessarily Sjögren’s with others studying Sjögren’s but not necessarily lymphoma in a two and a half day workshop. Between sessions, I observed considerable
Sparking new interest in Sjögren’s through such a workshop, which was encouraged by NIH and other researchers as the best way to increase interest in Sjögren’s

Engaging broad NIH interest and support for Sjögren’s syndrome

Inspiring participants to form new partnerships for research, several collaborations of which were formed during the final discussions

Assembling a major and valuable resource document, capturing the outstanding data and unusually high quality of the presentations and visual aids

Leading to public summaries of the workshop

Building on a 2001 workshop on autoimmunity and lymphoma

According to conclusions reached during a 2001 scientific workshop on the association between lymphoma and autoimmune disease, "Among all autoimmune diseases Sjögren's syndrome best illustrates the autoimmunity-lymphoproliferation-lymphoma sequence." (Nature Immunology, volume 2 #9, September 2001) This workshop, sponsored in part by the Sjögren’s Syndrome Foundation and chaired by Drs. Noel Rose and Elaine Alexander, marked the first time scientists formally gathered to focus on this strong clinical association. Discussions generated a great deal of scientific interest among participating investigators and pointed to the tremendous need for further discussion and collaborative sharing of ideas and data from numerous disciplines. The 2005 workshop built on this initial workshop to greatly expand our knowledge about lymphoma, autoimmune disease, and the striking association between them.

Special Thanks

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