Can An Experimental Blood Test Accurately Identify Fibromyalgia?

In a study, the often mis- or undiagnosed illness was successfully differentiated from related diseases.

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An estimated three in four people with fibromyalgia, a chronic disorder that causes pain, fatigue and tenderness all over the body, are not properly diagnosed. In fact, some people with the condition may wait as long as five years after first noticing symptoms for a proper diagnosis. But a new experimental blood test could help quickly and accurately spot this disorder in patients, suggests a new study published in the Journal of Biological Chemistry, reports Ohio State University.

For the study, researchers examined blood specimens from 50 people with fibromyalgia, 29 with rheumatoid arthritis, 19 with osteoarthritis and 23 with lupus. Scientists used a vibrational spectroscopy to measure the energy level of molecules within the sample.

To develop a baseline pattern for each diagnosis, researchers first checked the blood work of participants whose disease status they knew. Investigators assessed the rest of the samples blindly and successfully grouped individuals' specimens into the correct disease category based on a molecular signature that distinguished fibromyalgia patients' blood samples from those with related disorders.

"These initial results are remarkable," said testing method expert Luis Rodriguez-Saona, PhD, a professor of food science and technology at Ohio State University in Columbus and a coauthor of the study. "If we can help speed diagnosis for these patients, their treatment will be better and they'll likely have better outlooks."

Additionally, evidence showed that this technique, which scientists said worked like a "metabolic fingerprint," could potentially help determine how severe a patient's fibromyalgia is and lead to more personalized treatment.

Investigators hope to replicate these findings in a much larger inquiry to prepare a test for use within five years.

To learn more about fibromyalgia, click here.

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