# Lately in Lupus

There are plenty of promising findings for those who suffer from this autoimmune disease.

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Recently, the Cancer Therapy and Research Center in San Antonio, Texas, received a $1.12 million federal grant to figure out the precise set of hormonal signals that allow estrogen to interfere with the body's healthy immune function. This work could lead to an important breakthrough in lupus treatment.

"Your immune system has a really complicated job. It's got to figure out what's supposed to be there and what's not," said Tyler Curiel, MD, MP, an oncologist and immunologist at the center. "It's the Homeland Security of your body."

Interestingly, Curiel was trying to solve a mystery in ovarian cancer when the search showed him that estrogen and the immune system play a role in the development of lupus.

"What's cool is that insight in one area led to a discovery in another area, and both can benefit," Curiel says.

Earlier this year, a multicenter study conducted in China found that stem cells from the umbilical cord showed promise in treating patients with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) who are resistant to current therapies.

Most commonly, SLE causes joint pains, skin rashes and fatigue, and the illness may also damage the kidneys and other organs. SLE is much more common in women than men. It may occur at any age, but it appears most often in people ages 10 to 50. African Americans and Asians are affected more often than people from other races.

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