

DEFINITION

1. **Lupus Erythematosus** is an inflammatory disorder of connective tissue. It is usually subdivided into two types –
 - 1.1. **Discoid Lupus Erythematosus** is the term used when there are lesions only in the skin.
 - 1.2. **Systemic Lupus Erythematosus** is the term used when there is inflammation in many different organ systems.
2. Discoid lupus erythematosus and systemic lupus erythematosus are considered to be genetically different disorders. Nevertheless, they can be considered together as they have a similar pathological basis.

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

3. The main clinical features of systemic lupus erythematosus include fever, rashes, arthritis, and involvement of the kidneys, lungs, heart and other organs.

AETIOLOGY

4. The disorders have a characteristic age and sex pattern.
 - 4.1. Discoid lupus erythematosus affects twice as many females as males and the peak age of onset is said to be in the fourth decade in females and slightly later in males.
 - 4.2. Systemic lupus erythematosus affects eight times as many females as males and the peak age of onset is said to be at about 30 years in females and nearly 40 years in males.
5. Familial cases of lupus erythematosus have been described and cases have been reported in identical twins on occasion.
6. Patients of both sexes have an increased incidence of HLA antigens compared with controls.
7. Lupus erythematosus can be precipitated by drugs, especially hydralazine, by ultraviolet radiation, by bacterial infection and by mental or physical stress.
8. It has been proposed that what is required for the development of the condition are –
 - 8.1. genetic factors producing a predisposition to the disorder.

- 8.2. somatic mutations occurring in the stem cells of the lymphoid series leading to the development of “forbidden clones” of lymphocytes which multiply, synthesize cellular antibodies and, after an interval of **latent period**, cause the clinical manifestations of lupus erythematosus. This latent period is probably about 1.5 years in female infants, 2.5 in adult males and 5 years in adolescent and adult females.
- 8.3. The onset of the condition may be precipitated during the latent period by factors referred to at paragraph 8 above or, in the absence of such factors, the condition may develop spontaneously.

CONCLUSION

9. Lupus erythematosus is a disorder affecting the connective tissues and associated with immunological abnormalities. Two types have been described, Discoid – affecting only the skin – and Systemic – which may affect any organ or connective tissue. The aetiology of the disorder has not been fully established but it is thought to be the result of interaction between a genetic predisposition and environmental factors, the particular genetic predisposition determining whether the end result is discoid lupus erythematosus or systemic lupus erythematosus apart from being required for the disorder to occur at all.

REFERENCES

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