Blood Transfusion and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

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Presented at the Sydney February 1999 CFS Conference.

We analysed the data of 1210 consecutive patients complaining of chronic fatigue who visited our fatigue clinic at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

In this group, 752 patients fulfilled the CDC criteria for CFS (Fuduka, 1994). Of those CFS patients, 34 (4.5%) have a common factor in their past medical history that immediately preceded the onset of their CFS. These patients had received a blood transfusion a few days to a week prior to developing a flu-like syndrome that later proved to be the acute onset of their CFS. Another 8 patients also received a blood transfusion but their illness only started at least two months later, so that we cannot take these patients into our calculations.

None of these post-transfusion patients developed hepatitis C or other types of viral hepatitis. Some have antibodies (IgG) in time relationship to the blood transfusion could not be determined. In 9 of 35 patients the LMW RNase L account for the upregulation of the total RNase L enzyme activity. This 2-5A synthetase Rnase L pathway is activated in viral disorders.