



UNC
KIDNEY CENTER

Podcast Transcript:

Dr. Ron Falk

Vasculitis Foundation- North Carolina/Raleigh Chapter patient support meeting

May 2008

“Is there research being done to predict and then prevent the disease?”

Is there research being done to predict and then prevent the disease? So if you could predict a person having a disease, you would have to predict on the basis of genetics-is there a genetic propensity?-that one be one thing. And unfortunately, or fortunately, we don't know that there is a genetic propensity that we could test for. Haven't gotten that far. Although we're looking for genes or a combination of genes that might suggest that that person is more vulnerable. But none of use are there yet.

Here's the next question: Is there something that is in the environment that we know causes the disease? Because if we knew there was something in the environment that caused the disease, then we would tell everybody, oh please stay away from it. Susan Hogan in our group, did an environmental impact study. There are certain drugs that may cause this disease. Certain thyroid drugs. And there are certain environmental exposures-the biggest one is Silica, and Silica exposure over the long haul. So yes, there may be some preventative issues there. But for most autoimmune diseases, in 99 point something percent of patients, you can't prevent them. They happen. And then the issue is, how quickly can they be understood, picked up, and treated?

Is Vasculitis more prevalent? That's confounded. That's another wonderful question. It's confounded by the fact that there's widespread testing for Vasculitis, with antibody tests, and so, what was 20 years ago very hard to diagnose, is much easier to diagnose. And so, more cases are being reported, but that might just be a consequence of blood testing.

I think this disease comes and goes. There are pockets of prevalence. Kansas has a big pocket of people with Vasculitis. Absolutely a big pocket. It's pretty astonishing. We live in an area where there's a lot of Vasculitis. And we've done maps of river valleys, we've done where tick-borne diseases are, where deer population live, with zipcodes of people in our population, of their source of water, of their occupation—because I've had all sorts of theories, but I still think Silica, and Silica exposure, may be the big one.