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Free radicals and antioxidants in primary fibromyalgia: an oxidative stress disorder?

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Abstract

The role of free radicals in fibromyalgia is controversial. In this study, 85 female patients with primary fibromyalgia and 80 age-, height-, and weight-matched healthy women were evaluated for oxidant/antioxidant balance. Malondialdehyde is a toxic metabolite of lipid peroxidation used as a marker of free radical damage. Superoxide dismutase is an intracellular antioxidant enzyme and shows antioxidant capacity. Pain was assessed by visual analog scale. Tender points were assessed by palpation. Age, smoking, body mass index (BMI), and duration of disease were also recorded. Malondialdehyde levels were significantly higher and superoxide dismutase levels significantly lower in fibromyalgic patients than controls. Age, BMI, smoking, and duration of disease did not affect these parameters. We found no correlation between pain and number of tender points. In conclusion, oxidant/antioxidant balances were changed in fibromyalgia. Increased free radical levels may be responsible for the development of fibromyalgia. These findings may support the hypothesis of fibromyalgia as an oxidative disorder.

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