

Scientific Study

CFS Linked to Retrovirus

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By now the news that chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME), has been linked to a newly discovered retrovirus known as XMRV.

Researchers from the Whittemore Peterson Institute (WPI) at the University of Nevada and the Cleveland Clinic just published their finding in the journal, *Science*.

“CFS/ME is a debilitating disease that affects millions of people in the United States,” according to the National Institute of Health.

“We now have evidence that a retrovirus named XMRV is frequently present in the blood of patients with CFS. This discovery could be a major step in the discovery of vital treatment options for millions of patients,” said

Judy Mikovits, Ph.D., director of research for WPI.

The catch is that though there is an association between XMRV and CFS, it is not yet proven that XMRV causes CFS.

This news brings mixed reviews from the community.

Some are enthusiastic that it may lead to an easy blood test for diagnosing CFS/ME, which

until now has been a diagnosis of exclusion with no specific diagnostic tests. Though many tests for cytokines and chemokines, among others can point to CFS/ME, it has only recently enjoyed better recognition.

There have been many cases of sufferers being accused of faking and being left unable to care for themselves in the mistaken belief that when they are hungry or have to go to the bathroom, they will get up. The identification of a virus not only holds hope for better diagnostics and less abuse of patients, but also for a possible cause and treatment to return patients to functioning.

Current treatments are poorly rated by sufferers, largely because they are only energy management and coping techniques and not genuine medical treatments.

On the other hand, there is concern that the identification of XMRV is just a ploy for the pharmaceutical industry to sell expensive retroviral drugs. While this is possible, it’s unlikely as the founder of WPI has a daughter who has suffered with CFS/ME for many years. Part of the reason Whittemore founded the WPI was due to the lack of understanding and lack of diagnostic biomarkers for CFS/ME.

Whittemore has clearly cautioned that this discovery in no way assures that XMRV is the cause, just that it occurs in a significant proportion of CFS/ME patients when compared to controls.

