

System Lupus Erythematosus

Systemic lupus erythematosus, also referred to as lupus or SLE is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects many parts of the body- the organs and tissues. Although there is no cure for lupus, medication has allowed tons of people to live healthy active lives. Medication has allowed women between the ages of fifteen and forty-five to live a better life.. This is because it is a disease commonly found in this group of people; about “70-90% of affected persons are women” (Hahn, 2013). To be more specific among Latinos, black, and Afro- Caribbeans women (Hahn, 2013). It was found that SLE is, “three times more common in African American women than in Caucasian women” (National Institute of Health).

The etiology of systemic lupus erythematosus is unknown. However, it has been found that a combination of environmental, genetic, and hormonal factors cause this complex disease. Because it runs in families genetics seems to play a crucial part in the cause; at the moment no specific lupus has been identified. Pathogenic autoantibodies is found to cause SLE which appear years before symptoms. It was stated that environmental factors may cause SLE and those include the, “Epstein-Barr virus infection, exposure to ultraviolet light, estrogen-containing medications, silica dust, smoking, and tobacco” (Hahn, 2013).

Lupus affects many parts of the body such as the skin, tendons, joints, kidney, brain, heart, blood vessels, liver, gastrointestinal tract, and the blood. Those affected by SLE all go through different symptoms that “range from mild to severe and many come and go over time” (National Institute of Health). The symptoms that are commonly seen are painful or swollen joints, extreme fatigue, unexplained fever, red rashes usually on the face, chest pain when breathing, loss of hair, pale or purple fingers or toes, sensitivity to the sun, edema in legs or

around the eyes, swollen glands, and mouth ulcers. Of these symptoms arthritis, the red rash (also called butterfly rash) and oral ulcers on the hard palate are seen in almost everyone with SLE (Martinez, 2014). The butterfly or the malar rash typically appears across the nose and cheeks. It can also occur elsewhere- the ears, upper arms, shoulders, chest and hands. After years of SLE new symptoms may come up or not at all, it varies between people.

Diagnosing lupus is difficult to do and this is because no single test can determine if one has this disease. One has to go through several laboratory tests to diagnose SLS.