ANTIBODY TO ACETYLCHOLINE RECEPTOR IN MYASTHENIA GRAVIS: PREVALENCE, CLINICAL CORRELATES, AND DIAGNOSTIC VALUE

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Elevated amounts of antibodies specific for acetylcholine receptors were detected in 87 percent of sera from 71 patients with myasthenia gravis but not in 175 sera from individuals without myasthenia gravis, including those with other neurologic or autoimmune diseases. Antireceptor antibodies were not directed at the acetylcholine binding site of the receptor. Presence or titer of antibody did not appear to correlate with age, sex, steroid therapy, or duration of symptoms. Myasthenia gravis patients with only ocular symptoms had lower antibody titers, while the majority of titers in myasthenia gravis patients with thymoma exceeded the median titer of the myasthenia gravis group as a whole. Assay of antireceptor antibody should prove a useful test in the diagnosis of myasthenia gravis.

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Comment from Andrew G. Engel, MD, FAAN, Associate Editor: A landmark article that opened the door to the serologic diagnosis of AChR-antibody-positive myasthenia gravis.

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