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Vitamin D Deficiency Linked to Lung Transplant Rejection, Research Finds

ScienceDaily (Oct. 20, 2010) — Vitamin D deficiency is associated with a significant increase in lung transplant rejection, according to research conducted at Loyola University Health System (LUHS). These data were presented at The American Society for Bone and Mineral Research 2010 annual meeting in Toronto, Ontario.

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This study evaluated 122 patients who underwent a lung transplant at Loyola between January 2005 and June 2008. Sixty-four patients were male and 58 were female with an average age of 49.2 years. Vitamin D levels were checked following the transplants. Of the 122 patients, 50 percent were vitamin D deficient, 18 percent were not deficient and 32 percent were unknown. Vitamin D deficiency was associated with a significant increase in rejection for 51.7 percent of patients during the first year following transplant. Vitamin D deficiency also showed a trend toward increased airway inflammation in 16.7 percent of patients.

The health benefits of vitamin D are widespread and range from warding off cancer, osteoporosis, heart disease, diabetes and depression. Researchers speculate that vitamin D also may improve the health of lung transplant patients. Further studies will evaluate the effect of vitamin D therapy on short- and long-term lung transplant rejection rates, lung function and long-term survival.

Thomas Cascino, third-year medical student at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine (Stritch); Charles Alex, MD, FCCP, program director for lung transplant at LUHS; and Ramon Durazo, PhD, assistant professor of preventive medicine and epidemiology at Stritch, also were study investigators.

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