

New Animal Data Demands a Fresh Look at the Role of the Immune System in Fibromyalgia

Keynote Sessions

Faculty:

Ginevra Liptan

Although Fibromyalgia (FM) has not historically been considered an autoimmune disease, a surprising recent study demands a fresh look at the immune system's role in the generation of FM pain amplification. In this study, antibodies from FM subjects were infused into mice, which subsequently developed clinical signs of central sensitisation. This presentation reviews this new data and suggests a unifying hypothesis for FM pain generation that connects known myofascial and sympathetic nervous system abnormalities with the newly discovered role of antibodies. FM is characterised by persistent sympathetic nervous system hyperactivity, resulting in pathologic muscle tension and an impaired tissue healing response. Although autoantibodies play a key role in normal tissue healing, sympathetic nervous system hyperactivity impairs the resolution of inflammation and promotes autoimmunity and excessive autoantibody production. These autoantibodies can then trigger neuronal hyperexcitability in the dorsal root ganglion, leading to pain hypersensitivity and central sensitisation.

Immune system modulation may become an important treatment tool in FM going forward, along with therapies that reduce sympathetic nervous system activation and lessen myofascial tension. Direct manual treatments that lessen myofascial inflammation and tension play a key role in effective FM treatment. Myofascial release therapy has been shown to significantly reduce FM pain, with residual benefits even after the conclusion of treatment. Self-myofascial release techniques and gentle stretching programs also ease fibromyalgia pain, as do trigger point injections and dry needling.

About Our Speaker:

Ginevra Liptan

Ginevra Liptan, MD is a graduate of Tufts University School of Medicine, board-certified in internal medicine and trained in functional medicine. A fibromyalgia specialist, she is the Medical Director at The Frida Center for Fibromyalgia, Portland, Oregon, USA. She developed fibromyalgia as a medical student and spent many years using herself as a guinea pig to find successful treatments. Ginevra is one of the few specialists in the world focusing exclusively on fibromyalgia and has fine-tuned her integrative approach to treating thousands of patients. Dr Liptan is the author of *The FibroManual: A Complete Fibromyalgia Treatment Guide for You and Your Doctor*.

