



Do Calcium Values Help Diagnose Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma?

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Tamara Lobban-Jones:

This is a question from Pam. What role does calcium values—or do calcium values play in diagnosing non-Hodgkin lymphoma?

Dr. Leclair:

Calcium values looked at can be looked all differently at different times. Calcium is needed to control the way cells interact with each other. Calcium is used to make your bones strong. Calcium is used to regulate your pH and other entities in the blood, so it's a supporter on that kind of stuff. Calcium is necessary inside the cells in order to allow certain enzyme processes to go on. So calcium values can reflect changes in any of those.

When you're looking at a disease that has a lot of cell damage, a lot of cell death to it, whether because the cells are trying to mature and can't and just kind of die out, or whether there is some kind of that basic inflammatory process that's going on where they're being attacked by something, you get a lot of—when you get a lot of cell death like that, you get more calcium out in the peripheral blood than you should because those cells are dying off.

So in both Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma you've got a lot of cell turnover that's happening typically in the nodes, not very often in the bloodstream, and so what you're seeing with the changes in calcium there reflect the damage that's being done in the lymph nodes, the ones that you know you can pick up and see.

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