What’s the Difference Between Lupus and MS?

by BARBARA LEECH

Is There a Connection Between Lupus and MS?

With lupus I never know when a new health issue is actually a stand-alone problem or if it is connected and caused by the lupus.

It took years for me to get a diagnosis for lupus and along the way I was checked for a number of other conditions and diseases, including multiple sclerosis (MS). In fact, I didn’t get the all-clear on MS until recently, when I went to a new neurologist who identified the telltale white lesions on my brain as not a sign of MS, but one typical in people with lupus.

Her exact words were, “I can’t believe nobody ever made this connection before.” Me either.

She pulled up a program on her computer, popped in the disc of pictures from my brain MRI and showed me how my lesions did not match MS lesions. Then she typed in lupus and put an example image next to my own MRI picture. The white brain lesions matched in location, number, and were very close in size.

Tears streamed from my eyes as she told me she was 99 percent sure it was just lupus, not lupus *and* MS. This all came after two years of increased neurological issues in hot weather (something that happens in both lupus and MS), and several other specialists thinking that my white brain lesions meant a strong probability I also had MS.

Wondering why nobody had made this connection before, I searched online for the brain lesions of lupus, but I did not find very much. This new neurologist just happened to have experience with it and had this miraculous computer program to back up what she suspected.

I have no idea how many others have had symptoms and been told they have MS or that there is a strong possibility they will develop it.

Knowledge is power, so I felt sharing this may help someone else in a similar situation raise the question with the right doctor. The best thing you can do is to find a doctor willing to consider that there are answers that he or she has not heard of yet. I think many doctors do not know all that this disease can do, but a good one will investigate.

Lupus Symptoms I’ve Had That Mimic MS Symptoms

Heat/Sun Sensitivity

Heat and being in the sun make me feel very lightheaded and weak, as well as affecting my vision. I experience difficulty walking and my leg (typically one side) feels very heavy and drags.

I have difficulty thinking and saying the words I want to come out of my mouth. It has made me wonder whether I

am having a stroke. When I cool down the symptoms slowly improve.

Loss of Vision

Often heat is the culprit here, but I also had several occasions where I lost partial sight in one eye, like a window shade had been pulled part of the way down. Only the bottom half showed and the rest was black.

Memory Issues

I cannot easily remember the names of anyone I meet. I also sometimes get lupus brain fog and feel lost and confused.

Dizziness

Sometimes my equilibrium is off and I am dizzy in the shower when I close my eyes or if I get overtired.

If you have had similar issues and have been looked at for other possible diseases along with lupus, it doesn’t hurt to pursue the possibility with your doctor that lupus is the actual cause of all of your symptoms. The wolf seems to be capable of much more than we think.