

LETTER TO EDITOR

Chronic Musculoskeletal Pain in Females as A Manifestation Of Vitamin D Deficiency in Saudi Arabia

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To the Editor

In a cohort of patients with chronic musculoskeletal symptoms, Siddiqui (1) found that vitamin D deficiency is common and recommended screening for this disorder in this patient population. The author also concluded that treatment was beneficial and that clinical improvement was rapid. The study's findings and conclusions warrant several comments. Firstly, the study had a major methodological issue i.e. the lack of a control group. The observed improvement in symptoms could have been attributed solely to a placebo effect. It would have been appropriate to use a double-blinded placebo controlled design with 2 groups matched according to different variables such as age, sex, magnitude of symptoms, co-morbid conditions, and levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D. Secondly, the described method of follow up "clinical improvement of symptoms" is vague and does not provide clear clinical parameters. Since serum levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D were not measured during the course of treatment, it is not possible to determine that

the improvement in symptoms was in fact associated with correction of vitamin D deficiency. Levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D are required to assess the response to therapy and the need to adjust the dose of medication if needed (2). Thirdly, all patients were given the same dose of Alfacalcidol throughout the study. The dose of medication required to treat vitamin D deficiency differs significantly from that of patients with adequate levels of vitamin D who require only maintenance therapy (3). In addition, doses of therapy may vary according to the degree of vitamin D deficiency and some patients may require longer duration of therapy to achieve normal stores of vitamin D (2). The determining factor in such cases would be serum levels of 25-hydroxyvitamin D, which were not made available. In conclusion, the study by Siddiqui draws attention to a well known fact, vitamin D deficiency is common and should be considered in patients with unexplained musculoskeletal symptoms; however, the study had major methodological

issues that may invalidate the results and thus the conclusions.

References

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