

DEBATE: MS IS A SINGLE NOSOLOGIC ENTITY DUE TO AN AUTOIMMUNE MECHANISM? - NO

I. Steiner

Department of Neurology, Hadassah University Hospital, Jerusalem, Israel

In spite of intensive efforts, the etiology and pathogenesis of multiple sclerosis (MS) remain elusive. While the clinical manifestations of an inflammatory response in the brain and spinal cord are apparent, it is doubtful that they provide the pathological basis for the clinical progression and the disability in MS. There are sufficient reasons to question the validity of the hypothesis that an autoimmune process underlies MS and is responsible for the clinical syndrome. In fact, none of the five requirements to prove that a condition is immune-mediated are fulfilled.

The possibility that MS is a heterogeneous condition due to different processes such as inflammation, degeneration or metabolic abnormalities is fostered by the variability of presentation, the erratic clinical course and the unpredictable prognosis. These variable clinical parameters may reflect different etiopathogenetic entities that have a differential impact upon brain tissue and hence clinical progression.