How Viruses Can Trigger Autoimmunity Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Viral Mimicry and Autoimmunity

A virus will go into the system. It has to bind to something. So in this case, it'll bind into a cell. And when your body goes into wanting to take care of itself, you can see a virus being mimicked as itself or like other tissues in the systems, and then it will start fighting against itself.

Because of these viruses, such as COVID or on our panels, the Epstein-Barr or HHV-6, against its own tissue instead of needing to fight the virus just because of the cell mimicry.

Hi, welcome back to the Healthy by Dr. Jenn podcast. I'm Dr Jenn and today we're going to be talking to Robino Vojani. It's almost like my last name, Flegar, it's rough.

So she is a lab manager and marketing director for a laboratory called Immunosenescence Lab. We are going find out more about what they test for. She ensures that every clinician, patient and partner experiences the precision, reliability and care that define Immunosynescence Lab.

Guest Introduction and Immunosciences Lab Overview

She's actually the daughter of the founder, Dr. Artisto Vojani, and she's carried his legacy forward with the shared passion for advancing immunology and educating the next generation of practitioners.

So she oversees the daily lab operations, too, doing podcasts and being at events. So, she embodies the mission of bringing complex science to life through human connection.

Welcome, Rabina. It's an honor to be here. Thank you for having me. Yes, of course. I think for our practitioners listening out there, there's a lot of different choices for laboratory testing.

And sometimes it can be very overwhelming, honestly, especially if they're just starting out. Not only do you have to learn the lab you're ordering it from, you know what you are ordering, what it's going to say, and we want to try to make sure the patients have the best information because they are spending money on this.

So what specifically does Aminosin essence labs test for? So at ImmunoSciences, we focus on autoimmune disease. We have viral panels, full auto immune panels.

A full line panel that is all in-house testing. And we also provide now Long COVID and Long Covid and Brain Health is our newest panel. It's all serum-based testing and we find that our methodology is more accurate and, we have the ability to, for Dr.

Bojani to be in-house and a part of the whole process. We take pride in the accuracy that we. Yeah, that's really important to have accuracy when you're providing treatment for patients based on labs.

So your father, he founded the science and this lab. Tell us a little bit about his background. He's been in this business, but really just studying and researching for over 60 years.

And this is just really coming from his heart. It started with, you know, a mother who, was sick and not feeling well and trying to figure out at a very young age in his teens, how to help support her.

I think that created a really big mission for him to see how he can help heal and support anyone. And that led him to doing research and getting his PhD in immunology and also later creating a laboratory.

Founder Background and Immunology Research

So he's also the scientific advisor for Cyrex Labs. A lot of what we do and what they do is he designs all of the tests. That's amazing. So he studied immunology was his PhD.

Correct. What did he study most for that? I think it was really to find he understood at a really young age. He's 81, so this is many years ago. that something beyond genes, that there's something that our environment is affecting our bodies and wanting to understand what we can do and what can be done.

So, and the research goes on. He sees things about 10 years in advance. Yeah. And he was talking about, let's say, gluten sensitivity and understanding those triggers 15 or 20 years ago and really just wants to share and wants share his knowledge with everyone.

Yeah, that's great. Because a lot of the times when you get an autoimmune disease, you are just told that that is it. You need to go on a medication and that you can't reverse it, so I personally had Hashimoto's Thyroiditis and I was told as a medical student, there is nothing you could do.

It's an Autoimmune Disease named after a scientist and the thyroid will eventually just kill itself, or it will just die out. And it was just very frustrating when I found out, you know, five years later that that's not the case, that I can reverse that.

So why do you think autoimmunity is on the rise? I think personally, as we know it is gene-based. I could even share a little bit of my history about it personally.

And then our environment, our environmental factors in everything that we have, we're exposed to so many chemicals, specifically women, also men, what we breathe, how we eat things, and also the viruses and things.

Those are considered environmental. And when they are in the system, How your body responds to it and having so The body starts fighting it, and it will start fighting against itself.

So it's on the rise because our environment is unfortunately very toxic. And it is really important to be mindful of that, especially for even children that are being born into our world.

It's unfortunate. Younger and younger, they're getting autoimmune diseases.

Why Autoimmunity Is Rising

Unfortunately, yeah. So in my father's family, we have, my grandmother had rheumatoid arthritis, which has led him to where we are. And I found through testing with us at Immunosciences that I actually had borderline markers of rheuma toward arthritis which is on our auto immune panel.

This was about, I'd say five to 10 years ago and I'm in the early forties now. Instead of just saying, okay, this is what I have and let's wait 15, you know, I had very few symptoms, very little, if any, not any at all.

I just made the decision to change my lifestyle and personally went like on an anti-inflammatory diet and really found ways to reduce my stress substantially and essentially put myself first, right?

And learn how to help and heal myself as we can be our own patients sometimes. And then my markers went down. It was borderline to begin with. It wasn't full blown where it was at a border line level and then I was able to reduce it.

So I do a screening every six months, which Dr. Vaujani really recommends for a lot of patients in general care. to go over it and to make sure that your levels are where they need to be.

So I'll just be monitoring it. I know that it's in my family and it is genetic for me, but the environmental factors I think are what triggered it for.

Yeah, and its the epigenetics, the parts that we can change and just because So when your family had an autoimmune disease or heart disease that we can buy our environment and our nutrition and lifestyle, we change that and push the epigenetics in a positive way.

So I love that you also were able to check it in real time because I feel like that is really helpful when I don't know, this sounds bad, but sometimes I have certain patients where it's like they have to see it on paper, even though I can look and I'm like, hey, we need to change your diet and lifestyle.

I am concerned you might get an autoimmune disease like your family had, right? And they just dont change anything. So then you're like okay, were going to actually get the blood test to make sure.

And are they responsive to that? Yes, yes. Some people just, I feel like they have to see it on paper. Right. That's great at least. Yeah. Well, so what is the best way to screen for autoimmune diseases?

Because right now, honestly, like most doctors, rheumatologists, family practice doctors they're just ordering like an ANA or something.

Personal Autoimmune Monitoring and Epigenetics

Correct. So there's more. Yes, there is. The typical testing you can do is the ANA or ENA, and we include the full variation of it. So it's immune complex, mitochondrial, double-stranded DNA.

Sorry about that. And the variation can show you if you have it and also what type of autoimmune you'll have. That's really helpful. Yeah. How many panels are we talking about versus what they would just order at the doctor's So it's one or two panels for the typical general testing and we do about seven or eight.

Okay. And then those are ones that you can recheck and your father, he recommends every six months to see what's going on with them. Yeah. The recommendation should really and definitely does come from the practitioner.

But he is advising practitioners to help, you know, the patients to retest every six months just to see where the levels are. And also with the protocol, protocol that you all give to your patients, to se if it's really helping support their system and like how you can pivot as a practitioner too and help support them.

Absolutely. Now we've went through like, the pandemic and COVID, which is a virus. Since then, there's been an explosion of autoimmune diseases and everyone is positive in their ANA, I feel like.

Even if they've had the jab or the natural virus, why can viruses spike autoimmunity? Really good question. Which is actually, we'll go back to my grandmother.

She had an infection in her system, which we later found out that this is why her autoimmune became so severe throughout her life. And so it's the same thing that A virus will go into the system.

It has to bind to something. So in this case, it'll bind into a cell. And when your body goes into wanting to take care of itself, It can see a virus being mimicked as itself or like other tissues in the and then it will start fighting against itself.

Because of these viruses, such as COVID or on our panels, the Epstein-Barr or HHV-6, The body starts fighting against its own tissue instead of needing to fight it, the virus, just because of the cell mimicry and that they look so, yeah, correct.

Yeah. So, coin molecular mimicries a lot. Yes. Thank you. And even, so Epstein-Barr, you said herpes simplex 6, also COVID now. Gluten with Hashimoto's really big.

That's why I Like people are like even yesterday someone said something. Oh, I was leaving dinner and they're

like, did you try the mac and cheese?

Autoimmune Screening and Retesting

And I'm like no, no I mean free his like oh house. How's it? Like is it how's a going being gluten-free? I am like live celiac I just tell people that I've never been tested for so I but just to shine down sure I do though like I sure right but it's Really interesting because I'll have patients that have history of autoimmune thyroiditis and they're like, but I like the sourdough doesn't bother me.

I'm like yeah, But at a cellular level, it is bothering you. But they are like convinced because you know, all the TikTokers are exactly sour dough is natural and you can't, I just, sorry, struggle with that because I am like can you just listen to me?

But they don't have ears to hear, eyes to see. So I just try to brush off. But I do tell them, like, listen, just be gluten-free. It's okay. it's OK to just have different stuff.

We don' want to flare anything. Once you get the hang of it, it is quite easy. Yeah. Specifically with the positive ANA, have you or your father noticed any patterns post-pandemic with what the heck's going on.

So specifically, like, A&A being triggered and kids, so I know a conventional pediatrician, and this was two years ago, she was just talking about it.

She pushes every jab in the schedule, whatever, says they're perfect, there's never an injury. Right, like everyone gets a COVID vaccine. So she was like, oh, all of my patients have high ANA and all the parents are freaking out.

I'm like as they should because you don't offer anything, but specifically practicing now post-COVID. COVID is different. So what patterns are you, because you guys see so many tests come through.

Right. It is possible that A&A could show that an infection and that there's some form of autoimmunity, but I think the most important part is to understand where that's coming from.

Viruses, Molecular Mimicry, and Post-COVID Autoimmunity

And so in our tests, We do see that trend, but in our testing, it's also important to test for the viruses because now we know that the virus can be the part that's triggering the autoimmunity.

And so if you treat the the, virus, those markers can go down as well, the ANA. So what specifically, like viruses and COVID, what are you looking at?

So in our case, on our panels, COVID is a multifactorial. You can't just do one part of a test in order to say you have long COVID or not, especially with all the symptoms.

So we do our full autoimmune panel, obviously the long-COVID, the spike protein of of COVID. And we include HV6 and full Epstein-Barr as well because dormant viruses can be reignited and it's important to treat those.

So you are looking at the actual spike protein, the amounts in the body, you're able to see that? The antibody, yes. The antibodies to it, that's great.

Do you do anything with cytokine testing or anything? We do not, no. All right, so we are looking at all the different viruses and all of the autoimmune panels.

And then once the practitioner applies treatment or recommends treatment, then you can see if it's going down or if its helping. Exactly, yes. So what are the similarities between chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, and long COVID?

So we, we explained that they're very similar, if not almost the same thing. The symptoms are very, similar and

they also are stemmed from a virus. Obviously long COVID is coming from the COVID virus, but because it could be also Epstein-Barr, HHV-6, it's looked at the.

And it can also be treated very similarly. the symptoms. Almost exactly the, same. So we also don't explain that this is like just a long COVID panel.

We also express and emphasize how important it is if you have fibromyalgia or ME-CFS, that is a test that you can do testing for to see, you know, where your markers are at and how it can support your system.

Yeah, I actually loved, this is awful. Not that I love that this happened because the pandemic was horrible, but I loved that everyone is talking about long haul now because that's literally fibromyalgia patients, right?

Exactly. because it was usually Epstein-Barr triggered. And they've been suffering with this. I've had doctors be like, oh yeah, they're just fibromyalgia.

Like in the ER, the fibro-mialgia person's back and I'm like they have a root cause. They don't want to feel like this and they feel horrible. Yeah, no one wants to.

With the fatigue and the brain fog and it could be so severe.

Long COVID, Fibromyalgia, and Chronic Fatigue

So I want to feel like this, no. Right, they're not like, yeah, like why, pulling munchausens and muncihousens by proxy, that's pretty rare. And that a rule everything out, psychological, psychiatric DMSV diagnosis.

But almost like after the pandemic, everyone was talking about long haul and this fatigue. I'm like, oh, this is getting attention now at least. This is good that we are actually going to associate viruses And what they do to autoimmunity, we're actually connecting the dots that if our immune system is broken and can't handle these viruses or develop auto immunity from them, are actually going to look at the root cause and follow it.

But yeah, specifically, the ANA and these markers, Patients tend to get really frustrated when they come up positive. And I think you just have to let them know they are able to come down.

How many times have you seen labs come through and compared them to the old markers and their results? That's so good to hear. So all the time, not just every once in a while, right?

Right. Right. And I really believe that the protocol and the approach of the practitioner is essential. We provide the story of what the body is showing, the accurate story, something we take a lot of pride in.

But what all of you do is, I think, is more important than anything. The protocol you give and understanding what can really work. It's patient by patient.

Yeah, it is. One size fits all. Absolutely, yeah. Now, Lyme disease is also a big problem that, once again, I feel like it's getting more awareness, which is good, but some Lymes is not really treated awesomely.

By conventional medicine, they're not looking at root causes and the immune system. How is your Lyne testing different from the other Lymen testing out there?

Lyme Testing and Diagnostic Accuracy

So our Lyme panel includes 26 different antigens. So it includes subspecies co-infections and antibodies. And typically a general test for Lyne would just be, let's say Western blot, very general, which we also do include.

But because we are including the 26. antibodies, co-infections, and subspecies, the test is extremely sensitive. And so again, back to accuracy, you know exactly where it's coming from.

It's not just Borrelia burgdorferi or what it is. In a lot of cases, Dr. Bojani feels that there's cross-reactivity sometimes, that it may not be Lyme, it could be another form.

with him looking at our tests and running it for patients, he can give recommendations of possibly doing other testing because he could see that there's something else going on.

Yeah, and treating Lyme is really different than treating anything else and the medication and what patients go through is is very different and difficult.

So imagine being misdiagnosed and running and taking the wrong medication. Our tests will help the process of that and get the patient what they need.

Absolutely. Well, thank you so much. I was so excited to learn more about your labs. And I'm going to ask you a few lightning round questions. What is your favorite biohack that actually works?

I personally love the infrared sauna. Does that count? Does it count for saying me? The infrared sauna and how I feel and my skin looks and the energy I get and mainly the detoxification and your body detoxifies.

I have to thank my brother for that one, Dr. Vujdani for it. Oh I love it, that's amazing. Yeah, I just feel so much better.

Lightning Round and Closing Remarks

Now, if you can eliminate one toxin from the world today, what would it be? That's a really hard one. I would say all the heavy metals. Yes. Good one!

I'd say that, yeah. And our food especially. One last question. What is one word you would like our audience to hear this week? Kindness. Oh, that's a good one.

Yes. Be kind to yourself and know that the process isn't so easy all the time, but with the right support, you can get what you need. So just be kind yourself.

No guests there. I love that. That is amazing. Well, Rubina, thank you. It's such a pleasure. Tell everyone where they can find you and your lab and how to get a hold of you.

Wonderful. So we, Immunosciences Lab is in Los Angeles. You can also find us on Instagram, Facebook, on our website at immunosciencelab.com. We are really here to help support you all in this process.

And if you need anything, you can contact us at any time. Thank you so much.