

Antibodies produced within joints in rheumatoid arthritis

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Antibodies produced within the joints themselves may be responsible for joint damage in rheumatoid arthritis, according to new research published in *PLoS Medicine*.

Studying joint biopsies from people with rheumatoid arthritis, Costantino Pitzalis of Barts and the London School of Medicine and colleagues found that tiny structures in the joint lining mimic key functions of antibody-producing lymph nodes, and can support the production of specific antibodies that may play a role in joint destruction.

They found that these processes continued after joint tissue bearing the lymphoid structures was transplanted into mice without immune systems of their own, indicating that potentially destructive antibody production within joints can proceed independently of the body's lymph nodes.

Citation: Humby F, Bombardieri M, Manzo A, Kelly S, Blades MC, et al. (2009) Ectopic lymphoid structures support ongoing production of class-switched autoantibodies in rheumatoid synovium. *PLoS Med* 6(1): e1. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0060001

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