

Cigarette smokers who simultaneously have primary Sjögren's syndrome have reduced frequency of abnormal lower lip focus score

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Purpose. To analyse the frequency of abnormal lower lip focus score in smoking and non-smoking patients who fulfil the classification criteria for primary Sjögren's syndrome.

Design. Monocentre investigation of a prospectively followed cohort of 386 patients during 14 years diagnosed according to the Copenhagen criteria, i.e. at least two abnormal objective tests for the function of lachrymal glands as well as salivary glands. To confirm earlier registered smoking habits a detailed questionnaire was mailed to all living patients concerning past and present smoking habits and compared with a control group (N=3700). Lower lip biopsies were blindly re-evaluated by one oral pathologist.

Most important variables. Never smoked (ns). For current smokers (cs) the number of cigarettes per week and years. For former smokers (fs) the same variables as well as the year/month they stopped smoking. Abnormal focus score in the lower lip was defined as >1 lymphocyte focus/4 mm² tissue specimen.

Results. 98% (N=355) returned the smoking questionnaire. 51% were ns, 25% fs, 24% cs, and the results did not differ significantly from the figures in the control group. Cigarette smoking at the time of lower lip biopsy was associated with a lower risk of abnormal focus score (p< 0.001; odds ratio 3.5, CI95% 2.0-6.2). A cigarette dose (p~0.000) and slightly age dependent response was found.

Conclusion. We conclude that smoking significantly and in a dose response manner reduces the abnormal focus score in patients with primary Sjögren's syndrome. Our observation might have great importance when diagnosing Sjögren's syndrome.