

Lay Summary: EGPA in Severe Asthma Patients on Biologic Treatments

This study looked at a rare condition called eosinophilic granulomatosis with polyangiitis (EGPA), which can affect people with severe asthma. EGPA is a type of inflammation that damages blood vessels and can affect many parts of the body. It's often linked to high levels of a type of white blood cell called eosinophils.

Researchers studied 21 patients from 11 countries who developed EGPA while being treated with biologic drugs for severe asthma. These drugs are designed to reduce inflammation and help patients reduce or stop using oral steroids, which have many side effects.

Most of the patients had been on long-term steroid treatment before starting biologics. After starting the biologics, many began reducing their steroid use. EGPA symptoms appeared on average about 6 months after starting the biologic and a few months after tapering steroids. However, there was no clear pattern linking how fast or when steroids were reduced to the onset of EGPA.

Common symptoms included worsening asthma, sinus problems, fatigue, and lung issues. Some patients also had nerve pain, skin rashes, or heart and kidney involvement. Despite being on biologics that reduce eosinophils, many patients still had high eosinophil levels when EGPA was diagnosed.

All patients were treated with steroids again, and some switched to a different biologic drug (mepolizumab), which is also used to treat EGPA.

The study suggests that in some cases, steroids may have been hiding signs of EGPA, and reducing them allowed the disease to show up. Doctors should be aware of this possibility and monitor patients closely when tapering steroids, even if they are on biologics.