Vitamin D Deficiency Syndrome

Abstract

We propose Vitamin D Deficiency Syndrome (VDDS) exists when 25(OH)D levels of less than 25 ng/mL are found in patients with two or more of the following conditions: osteoporosis, heart disease, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, certain cancers, depression, chronic fatigue, or chronic pain. VDDS is more common among dark skinned races, the aged, and those who avoid the sun.

In-Home ZRT Vitamin D Blood Test Kit Don't be vitamin D deficient—Vitamin D Test Kits available! Serum 25(OH)D levels are obtained when the disorder is suspected. Serum 1,25(OH)2D3 levels have no place in diagnosing the syndrome and will mislead the physician. Sunlight, artificial light, oral or parental vitamin D, or a combination, aimed at restoring circulating levels of 25(OH)D between 35–55 ng/mL is the treatment of choice. Controlled sunlight is the safest form of vitamin D repletion. Vitamin D3 cholecalciferol is the preferred form of oral vitamin D.

Vitamin D is safe when used in physiological doses (those used by Nature). Physiological doses are doses of at least 5,000 IU per day, from all sources (sun, diet, and supplements). Should hypercalcemia occur with such doses, it is due to vitamin D hypersensitivity syndrome, not vitamin D toxicity. Vitamin D hypersensitivity syndromes include conditions such as primary hyperparathyroidism, occult cancers (especially lymphoma), or granulomatous disease (especially sarcoidosis). In such cases, treatment of vitamin D deficiency should be done under the care of a knowledgeable physician. A serum 25(OH)D, serum 1,25(OH)2D3, PTH, and SMA will lead the clinician in the right direction.

What a "Syndrome" Is

Webster's Dictionary defines a syndrome as a "group of symptoms or signs typical of a disease, disturbance, condition, or lesion...a set of concurrent things" while a disorder is a "derangement of function: an abnormal physical or mental condition." Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Copyright 1993 by Merriam-Webster, Incorporated.

Stedman's Medical Dictionary defines syndrome as "the aggregate of symptoms and signs associated with any morbid process, and constituting together the picture of the disease."

Vitamin D Deficiency Associated Symptoms

We propose that Vitamin D Deficiency Syndrome is a group of symptoms or signs typical of a disease, disturbance, condition, or lesion, a set of concurrent things and a derangement of function. VDDS is the aggregate of symptoms and signs associated with
the morbid process of vitamin D deficiency, and constitute together the picture of the disease.

Osteoporosis, heart disease, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, certain cancers, depression, chronic fatigue, and chronic pain comprises potential manifestations of the syndrome. That is not to say these illnesses are caused by vitamin D deficiency, nor that repletion of the vitamin D system will cure these illnesses. At this point, all that can be said is that these illnesses are associated with vitamin D deficiency.

**D Deficiency-Illness Link**

In a series of upcoming posts to this website, we will use the following five criteria to link each illness in VDDS with vitamin D deficiency:

1. Epidemiological evidence the incidence of each illness subsumed by VDDS has increased as UVB exposure has lessened.
2. Evidence that each illness subsumed by VDDS is associated with low 25(OH)D levels.
3. Evidence that the illnesses comprising VDDS show significant co-morbidity.
4. Theoretical models that explain how vitamin D deficiency plays a causative role in each illness of VDDS.
5. Clinical evidence that treatment with physiological doses of vitamin D improve each illness in VDDS.

Using these five requirements, we propose that Vitamin D Deficiency Syndrome, or VDDS, exists when 25(OH)D levels are less than 25 ng/mL in patients with two or more of the following conditions: osteoporosis, heart disease, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, certain cancers, depression, chronic fatigue, or chronic pain. VDDS is a group of diseases that are associated with chronic vitamin D insufficiency, and which cause a significant derangement of function. VDDS is more common among blacks, the aged, and those who either avoid the sun or are deprived of it.

**Multifactorial Illness**

It is important to clearly state once again, we are not saying these illnesses are all caused from vitamin D deficiency; they are all multifactorial illnesses. We are not saying that vitamin D will cure all these illnesses; it will not, although it may help. We are only saying that evidence exists for a dictionary definition of a syndrome that associates vitamin D deficiency with these illnesses. Scientific evidence currently exists that some of these illnesses may be caused by vitamin D deficiency. Furthermore evidence exists that some of these illnesses may be helped by vitamin D repletion. The current evidence varies with each illness. For example, strong evidence exists that vitamin D reduces osteoporotic fractures, but only two small studies exist to show vitamin D helps depression.
However, those practicing medicine are not practicing science. Scientists practice science by conducting controlled experiments. Physicians practice medicine by making clinical decisions. Clinical decisions are always made using a benefit versus risk analysis, with current scientific knowledge as the cornerstone of the decision making process. Practicing physicians use this formula in every clinical decision they make, with every patient and do so many times a day. They need to make the same decision concerning VDDS and vitamin D repletion.


 Syndromes range from a group of behaviors (pathological demand avoidance syndrome), a group of signs and symptoms (irritable bowel syndrome and premenstrual syndrome), a group of clinical and lab findings (variably called the insulin resistance syndrome, metabolic syndrome, or syndrome X), a single clinical finding with various etiologies (organic dust toxic syndrome), a collection of clinical findings presumably of various etiologies treated with a single surgical procedure, tonsillectomy (Marshall's syndrome), a specific and abnormal EKG with multiple etiologies (long QT syndrome), a specific germline mutation usually resulting in colon cancer (Lynch syndrome), life-threatening cardiac dysfunction without a specific finding, QT elevation, whose etiology is multifactorial (non-ST segment elevation acute coronary syndrome), a diagnosis of exclusion with various etiologies including parental murder (sudden infant death syndrome), a single but common symptom (precardial catch syndrome), a rare vasculitis with diverse diagnostic and pathological criteria (Churg-Strauss syndrome), a collection of acute multisystem dysfunction presumed secondary to an unknown hypersensitivity (Goodpasture's syndrome), a syndrome of encephalopathy associated with a high antibody concentration some call mythical (Hashimoto encephalopathy syndrome), to a syndrome diagnosed entirely on symptoms (chronic fatigue syndrome). Therefore the word syndrome has various medical uses—uses that fit the lay dictionary definition.

For example, the ICD-9 contains a descriptive syndrome, misery and unhappiness disorder (313.1). ICD-9. World Health Organization International Classification of Diseases, 1998. Another example is false memory syndrome, a syndrome first coined in the legal arena, but now widely used in the psychiatric literature. Analysis of any of the multiple and varied syndromes listed above makes it clear to the reader that strict criteria do not exist for naming a new syndrome. All that is important is that the syndrome describes a useful clinical concept, grounded in medical science, which helps doctors alleviate suffering.

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