

Lab investigation corner

Mild Elevation of transaminases.

Many a times we see that ALT and AST (SGOT and SGPT) mildly elevated together or alone in some cases. One of the most common cause is fatty liver. Fatty liver affects more than 30% Indians and its quite common to see this elevation.

If you suspect nothing else, ask patient to do Ultrasound abdomen where grading of fatty liver can be obtained. No need for Ultrasound elastography or Fibroscan tests for mild elevation of transaminases. If the ultrasound is normal, then eating of junk foods on days before testing is the usual cause. Ask the patient to repeat tests after 2 weeks.

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1. Rheumatoid Factor (RF):

Pearls:

The term '**rheumatoid factor**' is a misnomer. RF positivity is seen in 5% of healthy individuals, and in a variety of non-rheumatologic conditions including Hepatitis C, HIV, subacute bacterial endocarditis, malignancy and cirrhosis. Most people with an elevated rheumatoid factor will not have rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Perhaps we should change the name of this test.

RF testing is most **useful in** patients with a **symmetric inflammatory polyarthritis**, typically involving the **MCP** and **PIP** joints. Inflammatory features include prolonged **morning stiffness** (>1 hour), pain improving with activity, presence of joint **swelling**, and **elevated CRP**.

Pitfalls:

A negative RF does not rule out rheumatoid arthritis in patients with an inflammatory symmetric polyarthritis.

30-50% of RA patients can be RF negative. Therefore, RF negativity should not prevent referral of a patient with inflammatory arthritis.

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