



ADHESIVE ARACHNOIDITIS (AA)

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ADHESIVE ARACHNOIDITIS (AA) IS SIMILAR TO RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (RA)

In many respects AA is like RA in joints. The inflammation inside the spinal canal, like inflammation in a joint, causes swelling, heat, and pain. It may go into temporary remission and then unexpectedly exacerbate. If uncontrolled, inflammation in a joint may erode tissue and literally destroy a joint. The same is true of inflammation in the spinal canal. If uncontrolled, inflammation can erode and destroy or injure nerves and the arachnoid-dural covering (meninges) of the spinal canal. Inflammatory damage to the arachnoid-dural covering may lead to cyst formation (Tarlov type) and seepage and leakage of toxic spinal fluid into the tissues surrounding the spinal canal.

The inflammation of AA and RA are both caused by overactive cells in tissue. In joints the cell is called a lymphocyte, and in nerve tissue it is called a glial cell. Inflammation produces waste that enters the blood. They are often called “markers” of inflammation. Common ones are the erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR), C-reactive protein (CRP), and a class of waste particles called cytokines. Persons with RA and AA should have these markers periodically measured to help judge the activity and severity of inflammation.

For unknown reasons the inflammation of AA and RA may extinguish or “burn out”. In other cases, it may be progressive and cause unbearable pain and suffering. While the misery of the pain may be the first concern of a person with either disease, controlling and suppressing the inflammation with a combination of physiologic and medical measures is necessary lest the disease be progressive and continue the destruction of tissue.

SIMILARITIES OF RA AND AA

	<u>RA</u>	<u>AA</u>
Inflammatory Disorder	Yes	Yes
Causes Tissue Destruction	Yes	Yes
Responds to Corticosteroids	Yes	Yes
Responds to Specific Anti-inflammatory Agent	Yes	Yes
Inflammation May Stop or “Burn Out”	Yes	Yes