Medication linked to increased risk of inflammatory bowel disease

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Medications that target tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF?), a protein involved in inflammation, have revolutionized the management of certain autoimmune diseases, but paradoxically, these agents might provoke the development of other autoimmune conditions.

In an *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* study of 17,018 individuals with autoimmune diseases who were treated with anti-TNF? medications—mostly infliximab, etanercept, and adalimumab—and 63,308 individuals who were not, treatment with etanercept, but not other anti?TNF? agents, was linked with an elevated risk of developing inflammatory bowel disease: a twofold increased risk of Crohn's disease and a twofold increased risk of ulcerative colitis.

"This study established that there is an increased risk of developing inflammatory bowel disease in individuals taking etanercept. Recognition of this phenomenon is important for clinicians taking care of these patients," said lead author Joshua Korzenik, MD, of Brigham and Women's Hospital, in Boston. "Perhaps more importantly, this study suggests that inflammatory bowel disease may be one of the auto-immune diseases that can be provoked by anti-TNF? agents. This suggests that there may be a common mechanism of immune dysregulation underpinning these diseases."

More information: Joshua Korzenik et al, Increased risk of developing Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis in 17 018 patients while under treatment with anti-TNF? agents, particularly etanercept, for autoimmune diseases other than inflammatory bowel disease, *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* (2019). DOI: 10.1111/apt.15370

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