



Scleroderma Society of Ontario

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Improved Diagnostic Criteria for Systemic Sclerosis

Dr. Janet Pope from the University of Western, Ontario is conducting research to improve diagnostic criteria for persons living with systemic sclerosis (SSc). Current diagnostic criteria in SSc are unsuitable as one third of patients with SSc do not meet criteria. Limitations of these criteria stem from the fact that they were intentionally designed to be specific rather than sensitive. Second, the substrate used for the antinuclear antibody (ANA) test used at that time did not detect anti-centromere antibodies. HEp-2 cells, human epithelial cells now used as the gold standard substrate, can detect these antibodies and are widely available in clinical labs. Also antitopoisomerase detection, now routine, was not routinely performed at that time. Third, the statistical methodology used in the 1980 paper is unclear. There have been suggestions to revise the criteria by including other clinical features such as nailfold capillaroscopic abnormalities and serological abnormalities. In addition, more modern statistical methods of classification may yield better criteria.