Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressively debilitating neurodegenerative disease that affects both the upper and lower motor neurons. Its estimated annual incidence rate is around 200,000 with around 5-10% being familial. The cause for the remaining 90% of cases is unknown but among the risk factors identified age.

Methods

Plasma exchange (PLEX) has been posited as a therapy but previous research on the topic has been inconclusive. This project’s goal was to assess whether there was a benefit to using PLEX to slow the decline.

Results

Compared to the control patients, the PLEX did not show any benefit when it comes to slowing the functional decline related to ALS over the 12-month period. This is consistent with previous work done by other teams. ALSFRS-R scores did, however, decline at a slower rate during the treatment period. Further research needs to be done to probe this relationship.

References and A

1. Rowland, Lewis. NEJM. 2001; 344: 1688-1700
3. Wijesekera, Lokesh. Orphan J Rare Diseases. 2009; 4. 3

The author would like to thank Dr. Elijah Stommel, Catherine Andrews, and Dr. Maeve Tischbein for the support and guidance throughout this project.