Don’t Order Both Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR) and C-Reactive Protein to Look for General Inflammation in Patients

C-reactive protein (CRP) is ordered in case of acute phase inflammation while erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) is ordered for patients with chronic inflammation such as rheumatoid arthritis.

The CRP response is quick and caused by cytokines, which are produced by white blood cells in case of inflammation. High level of CRP does not specify the exact cause of inflammation.

CRP responds faster to changes in inflammation but after inflammation is resolved, ESR may still be elevated for days. There are some conditions where the ESR rate is superior – detecting low-grade bone, joint infections, and monitoring disease activity in systemic lupus erythematosus. The inflammatory marker of CRP and ESR may increase because of body mass index and age respectively.

Understanding their role in medical practice is a must for healthcare professionals before investigating general inflammation.

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