



## Use of Tocilizumab in Spondyloarthropathies

Evidence Based Medicine

Official recommendations

Expert opinion

Spondyloarthropathies may constitute potential candidates for treatments directed against interleukin-6 (IL-6).

### Rationale for targeting IL-6 in spondyloarthropathies

Although to date no case-reports or prospective studies of tocilizumab in spondyloarthropathies are available, several findings provide a rationale for targeting IL-6 in these diseases.

Several studies showed serum IL-6 elevation in patients with ankylosing spondylitis (over 85% of the patients studied by Tutuncu<sup>(125)</sup>, compared to controls (Table 12).

However, there is no evidence that serum IL-6 levels predict disease progression over the following year<sup>(133)</sup>.

In a study of 4 patients with ankylosing spondylitis, François et al.<sup>(134)</sup> consistently found evidence of IL-6 expression in the sacroiliac joints, with higher expression levels in early active lesions.

No association was found between ankylosing spondylitis and the polymorphism of the IL-6 gene promoter<sup>(135)</sup>.

### IL-6 antagonist therapy in spondyloarthropathy: data from the literature

To date, a single case has been published. The patient had severe undifferentiated spondyloarthropathy that responded to a murine monoclonal antibody against IL-6 (different from tocilizumab) combined with a monoclonal antibody against CD4<sup>(133)</sup>.

### Selecting patients for IL-6 blockade

A discussion of patient selection would be premature, as the efficacy of tocilizumab has not been evaluated in patients with spondyloarthropathy. In patients with axial disease that is inadequately controlled by NSAID therapy, TNF antagonists are the only available biotherapies.