

## Mast cells in fibromyalgia

### Response to: Complementary and alternative medicine in fibromyalgia: a practical clinical debate of agreements and contrasts

G. CASSISI *et al.*

Sirs,

We would like to add a comment to the excellent review of fibromyalgia recently published in *Clinical and Experimental Rheumatology* (1).

Vaso-occlusion by rigid, adherent red cells causes ischaemic damage and pain in sickle cell anaemia. Though the pain is usually episodic, frequently triggered by intercurrent infection, about 30% of patients have almost continuous pain. This latter pain may not be entirely consequent to ischaemia. Vincent *et al.* postulated that there was a neurogenic

basis for the continuous pain and that neuropeptides and neuromodulators, including tryptase, might be involved (2). Using an animal model of sickle cell anaemia they found that inhibiting mast cell activation reduced pain. Their conclusion adds weight to an earlier study which found that inhibiting mast cell activation reduced pain in human subjects with sickle cell anaemia (3).

The possibility that inhibiting mast cells activation in other chronic pain syndromes remains to be explored. Fibromyalgia seems particularly worthy of study since there is a three-fold increase in mast cells in skin biopsies from these patients (4, 5).

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## References

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