Neuroendocrine tumors: What they are and why ongoing testing is necessary

Neuroendocrine tumors (NETs) develop from hormone-producing cells that are widely scattered throughout the organs of the chest and abdomen. These cells (and their tumors) can be found in the intestines, pancreas, lung, stomach, ovaries, appendix and rectum. Overall, NETs comprise between 1-2% of all reported cancers, and it has been noted that they are increasingly being identified.

NETs present a considerable diagnostic and therapeutic challenge as their clinical presentation is usually nonspecific while some may exhibit no symptoms. Each tumor in each specific patient exhibits its own particular pattern of symptoms, growth and spread. Thus, individualization of each patient is critical to optimizing management and outcome.

No curative treatment exists for NETs. Standard treatment remains as radical surgery (total removal of the tumor and adjacent tissue). This is often unsuccessful since the majority of tumors have spread prior to diagnosis. The most effective therapies treat the symptoms and lengthen the time period before a relapse or recurrence occurs. After treatment, a tumor can be in “remission”.

Irrespective of the expertise applied to the problem, NETs usually recur after the original treatment. Patients must often “live” with this chronic disease and realize the importance of accurate monitoring and testing in optimizing their disease management. With recurrence comes the cycle of testing, which is undertaken to learn as early as possible if the disease has recurred and as much as is possible about how the disease is progressing or how effective is the action of therapy. The NETest™ uses proprietary molecular assays, which when combined with your providers expert clinical service, represents a personalized characterization for each individual patient of their particular cancer.

Why the NETest™?

Made commercially available in 2014, the NETest is a non-invasive procedure that uses a blood sample to inform your doctor what the activity of your neuroendocrine tumor is at the time your blood was drawn. It requires a simple blood draw.

The NETest is intended to aid in the identification of active disease. This allows the physician to accurately assess tumor status and treatment responses at the time of testing. The physician will use the test results in conjunction with standard clinical assessment to direct your optimal disease management.
Advantages of the NETest™:

- Identifies that you have the disease.
- Is more sensitive and specific than any other available blood test.
- If the tumor has been removed, it helps determine whether you have residual disease.
- If the disease has been treated, it helps define the efficacy of your therapy.
- If the disease is considered cured, it can confirm the absence of any residual tumor.
- If you have symptoms that are considered to be manifestations of NET disease e.g., flushing, it will help identify if they are due to neuroendocrine tumor (NET) disease.
- Provides a personalized molecular analysis of your specific tumor.
- Is unaffected by dietary agents or food.
- Does not require fasting.

The NETest™ allows your physician to adjust therapy appropriately to better manage the disease and provides you with added information to understand, in real-time, the status of your disease and the effectiveness of your treatment.

Understanding your NETest results

The NETest is a panel that includes 51 gene assays that are informative about the biology of the tumor. The results from the gene expression data are used in the calculation of an overall NETest score – a percentage ranging from 0 to 100%. Once completed, your individualized NETest report is delivered to your treating physician, who will — along with your clinical assessment and other test results — make an appropriate interpretation.

Additional details and resources available online

For additional details, including an online resource library, glossary and FAQs, as well as health insurance and financial assistance information, please visit wrenlaboratories.com.

For any specific patient-related questions, please contact our Consultant, Simona Deifta, at telephone 44 (0) 7454101915 or via email at sdeifta@wrenlaboratories.com.