

*Media release*

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## **Inselspital: Combination Therapy Spares Rheumatic Patients**

**Up to now it was only treatable through highly dosed steroids. But a new combination therapy utilised by Bern University Hospital controls giant cell arteritis more efficiently and gently for patients.**

At the annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology it was “late breaking news”: Sabine Adler, Chief Physician in the Department of Rheumatology, Clinical Immunology and Allergology at Bern University Hospital, was able to show with her research team in a double-blind study that giant cell arteritis can be controlled within a few months with a new combination therapy, and a relapse can be averted.

### **Stop inflammation directly in the cell**

The additional medication neutralises the messenger substance that is responsible for the vascular wall inflammation. Together with conventional steroids the inflammation can be quickly and completely contained. The responsible research team in the Department of Rheumatology was the first worldwide to document the efficacy of the new approach in a clinical trial. With a total of 30 patients, it tested the combination of steroids with the new medication against a combination of steroids and placebo.

Out of the 20 patients who received the new therapy, 17 no longer had any complaints after 12 weeks of therapy, and 17 also had not suffered any relapse (each corresponds to 85%). In the control group of 10 patients, only 4 were complaint-free (40%) and only 2 did not suffer any relapse (20%).

“These are outstanding results”, says Prof. Peter Villiger, Chairman and Head of the Department of Rheumatology, Clinical Immunology and Allergology at Bern University Hospital. “This is not only phenomenal news for rheumatologists, internists and general practitioners, but naturally first and foremost for the affected patients.”

### **Blinding and life-threatening haemorrhages**

Giant cell arteritis is a form of rheumatism which affects the large blood vessels in the head and the aorta. The disease inflames the vascular wall and can lead to blindness. Giant cell arteritis is currently only treated with steroids. However, the steroids must be highly dosed in order to contain the disease. That is why patients often struggle with strong side effects.

*Caption:*

[Sabina Adler presents her research results in Washington D.C.](#) (photo: zvg.)

*Further information for media representatives:*

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