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Research Alert

UCLA and Biotech Company Intrinsic Lifesciences Develop First Blood Test to Measure Key Hormone that Regulates Iron

New Test to Help Clinicians Better Diagnose Anemias and Iron Overload Diseases

FINDINGS:

UCLA and Intrinsic LifeSciences, a San Diego biotech company, developed the first method to measure the hormone, hepcidin, which regulates the absorption of dietary iron and its distribution in the body. This new blood test will help clinicians manage chronic conditions affecting millions of people worldwide such as anemias and iron overload diseases.

IMPACT:

The new test will measure the amount of hepcidin in the blood. When levels of the hormone are too high, the availability of iron is blocked, leading to conditions like anemia of chronic disease. When levels are low, too much iron is absorbed from the diet and released into the blood, leading to iron toxicity and conditions like hemochromatosis or iron overload disease. The current tests do not measure hepcidin but instead measure some of its direct and indirect effects on iron and the iron-binding proteins transferrin and ferritin. The new blood test will directly measure hepcidin, offering more information to clinicians to help diagnose conditions and monitor the levels of this important hormone in their patients -- leading to more efficient management of these chronic diseases.

FUNDING:

Funded by Intrinsic LifeSciences, LLC.

AUTHORS:

Dr. Tomas Ganz, professor of medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and Mark Westerman, Ph.D., chief executive officer of Intrinsic LifeSciences, LLC, are available for interviews. Dr. Ganz is also a co-founder of the company.

JOURNAL:

The research appears in the Aug. 8 online edition of the peer-reviewed journal Blood.

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