

The last tool that we should use when not sure about the diagnosis of hypothyroidism is the thyroid ultrasound. Thyroid ultrasound, we're not looking for nodules. We are looking for the pattern, the ultrasonographic pattern, of the thyroid, sometimes a patchy pattern, and the radiologist will tell you that it indicates that there's something going on in that thyroid.

Sometimes the antibodies are not very high. We have more cellular immune processes going on in the thyroid and not so much immunological processes, and a patchy pattern, it's compatible with an active autoimmune thyroiditis. And therefore, it will put something in our mind saying, yes, there is something going on. We should keep an eye sooner than later on this patient.

And the reason we should be absolutely sure of the diagnosis is because once we start that patient on levothyroxine or whatever treatment we're going to do for that patient, that patient is going to be labeled for life as having hypothyroidism. And therefore, this is a real important decision that you have to make, because if a patient has a TSH of six or 5.5 and not very symptomatic and to start that patient on levothyroxine without being absolutely sure, we label that patient as hypothyroid. And therefore, for life, number one, they will have to take that tablet every day.

And the other thing is, if they start developing symptoms in the future, that whatever symptoms they have, cognitive symptoms, psychiatric symptoms, mood-behavior symptoms, they will blame it on the hypothyroidism. And therefore, it's going to be hard, because imagine if that patient did not have hypothyroidism but had an elevated TSH, but thyroid function was perfectly compensated and T3 and T4 levels were OK, then we have what we have today in our clinics which is patients that were misdiagnosed.

They were treated with the thyroid hormone replacement therapy, they developed symptoms, and they blame it on the inefficiency of the treatment that was started with. And that's very confusing, because we don't know is it the treatment that's not working or is that patient, they never had hypothyroidism to start with?