There are many autoimmune diseases, and taken together they affect as much as 4.5 percent of the world’s population. This list of 76 disorders is drawn from a detailed analysis by immunologists Scott M. Hayter and Matthew C. Cook, then at Australia National University, that was published in 2012.

The illnesses affect different parts of the body, and several strike multiple organs. Women are most frequently afflicted, although the exact gender ratios differ among individual diseases. The approximate average ages of onset and the frequency in the population also vary.

Immunologists and rheumatologists acknowledge that autoimmunity can be a murky research area, and they are still discovering features that characterize a disorder as autoimmune or not.

In general, the diseases presented here fall into three categories, based on the strength of evidence that they are driven by an autoimmune response and proteins known as autoantibodies.

In the clearest cases, such as Graves’ disease, the illness definitely involves autoantibodies that lead to an immune system assault, inflammation and debilitating symptoms.

In many others, including Guillain-Barré syndrome, autoantibodies are often present, but scientists have not been able to tie them consistently to the pathology of the disease.

Finally, some disorders do not always show autoantibodies, yet they respond well to treatments that affect the immune system.
This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.