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INTRODUCTION: Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (PAH) is the leading cause of death in patients with systemic sclerosis. Newer treatment modalities have improved the outcome; hence the early identification of this complication is important. AIM To study the predictors of PAH in patients with Systemic Sclerosis who attended the out patient service of Pulmonary Medicine, Medical College, Kottayam.

METHODS We studied 28 cases of systemic sclerosis. 18 patients had diffuse form, 8 had overlap syndrome and 2 had limited form of the disease. All patients were evaluated by spirometry, DLCO, HRCT of the lungs, and echocardiography examination. They were grouped to different forms by clinical examination and by antibody detection. Statistical study was done using independent t test and chi-square test.

RESULTS All 28 patients were females. Among the diffuse form 13 patients (72%) had interstitial lung disease (ILD) and 6 patients (33%) had PAH Among patients with overlap syndrome (including PSS) 5 had ILD (63%) and 3 had PAH (38%). No patient with limited form had ILD, but all the two had PAH (100%). Among 18 diffuse form 6 patients had PAH and their mean FVC is 52.6% and DLCO of 29%. Patients without PAH had a mean FVC of 53.0% and a mean DLCO of 46%. CONCLUSIONS Higher prevalence of PAH was observed in patients with limited variety when compared with diffuse form and overlap syndrome. In diffuse form PAH was associated with ILD and no such association was found in limited variety. A decreasing DLCO is an excellent predictor of the development of PAH in diffuse Systemic sclerosis.