Red blood cell distribution width

The red blood cell distribution width (RDW) is a parameter used in blood test to evaluate the size and variability of red blood cells (erythrocytes). RDW is expressed as a percentage or as a numerical value, and represents the amplitude of the distribution of erythrocyte sizes in a blood sample.

RDW is used along with other blood parameters, such as mean corpuscular volume (MCV) and mean corpuscular hemoglobin (MCH), to evaluate the presence of anemia and to aid in the diagnosis and monitoring of diseases related to red blood cells.

A high RDW indicates greater variability in the size of erythrocytes, which may be indicative of anemia caused by iron deficiency, chronic inflammation, or kidney disease. On the other hand, a low RDW indicates less variability in the size of erythrocytes, which may be indicative of anemia caused by vitamin B12 or folic acid deficiency, or a liver disease.

It is important to note that RDW is not a diagnosis in itself and should be evaluated in conjunction with other blood parameters and the patient's medical history.