Objectives: The aim of this study was to determine whether depression level is effected by response to therapy and compare the effectiveness of DMARD therapies in terms of quality of life, anxiety and depression levels in patients with RA.

Methods: A total of 105 patients (Conventional DMARDs, n=67; Biological Therapy, n=38) with RA participated to the study. Disease activity was assessed using the Disease Activity Score in 28 joints (DAS28). Remission was defined as the absence of disease activity (i.e. tender joint count [TJC]<15, swollen joint count [SJC]<15, C-reactive protein <10 mm/hr). The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) was used to measure both anxiety and depression level. The Rheumatoid Arthritis Quality of Life (RAQoL) questionnaire was applied to assess quality of life. The drug therapy groups were compared using the Kruskal-Wallis test and the Chi-square test. Correlation between the scales was evaluated by Spearman’s correlation coefficient.

Results: There was no statistical difference in terms of RAQoL scores, disease activity and anxiety/depression scores between conventional DMARDs (RAQoL=16.78; DAS Remission%=46.3; Anxiety score=9.31; Depression score=7.34) and biological therapy (RAQoL=13.87; DAS Remission%=35.8; Anxiety score=8.24; Depression score=9.13) (p=0.096; p=0.816). RAQoL scores were significantly higher in patients with higher disease activity treated with conventional DMARDs (conventional DMARDs, DAS Activity%=43.3; biological therapy, DAS Activity%=39.5; RAQoL=17.54; p=0.006). RAQoL scores were statistically lower in patients with lower disease activity (p<0.001). Depression levels were statistically higher than anxiety levels (p=0.008).

Conclusions: Our results demonstrated that the presence of depression coexisting with RA independent from disease activity may result in poorer clinical response to standard therapies. According to recent ACR recommendations, RA patients who may be candidates for biologics (eg, infliximab, etanercept, adalimumab) include patients with high disease activity, and those who have previously failed to respond adequately to conventional DMARD therapy. However, the results of the study suggest that different pharmacological therapies are not enough to improve quality of life in patients with RA. There is a need for certain non-pharmacological treatments integrated with medication management based on bio-psycho-social approaches to cope with depression in RA patients.

REFERENCES:

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**THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING WITH FATIGUE AMONG PEOPLE WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS – A QUALITATIVE META-SYNTHESIS**

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Background: People with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) experience fatigue as the most significant symptom of their illness. Despite a substantial body of knowledge about fatigue, there is a need for an overall comprehensive understanding of the experience of living with fatigue among people with RA.

Objectives: To identify, appraise and synthesise qualitative studies on experiences of living with fatigue in people with RA

Methods: We conducted a qualitative meta-synthesis, inspired by Sandelowski and Barroso. This included a systematic literature search conducted in February 2017, for studies published in the past 15 years, in the databases PubMed, Cinahl, Embase, SveMed, PsychInfo and Web of Science. To be included the studies had to include findings regarding the experience of adults with RA living with fatigue. The International Critical Appraisal Skill programme was used to assess the quality. The analysis and synthesis were inspired by Malterud’s systematic text condensation.

Results: Eight qualitative articles were included. The synthesis resulted in an overall theme ‘fatigue: the vicious cycle of an unpredictable symptom’. In addition, the analysis derived five subthemes, ‘being alone with fatigue’, ‘necessity prioritising in everyday life’, ‘when time gets a different meaning’, ‘language as a tool for increased understanding’ and ‘strategies to manage fatigue’. Fatigue affects all areas of everyday life for people with RA. They strive to plan and prioritise, pace, relax and rest. In addition, they try to make use of a variety of words and language to help others understand that the RA-related fatigue they experience is not ‘normal’ fatigue. People with RA-related fatigue experience feeling alone with their symptom, but they develop their own strategies to manage fatigue in their everyday life.

Conclusions: The unpredictability of RA-related fatigue is dominant, pervasive and is experienced as a vicious cycle, which can be described in relation to its physical, cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural impact.