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Disclosure of Interests: None declared

DOI: 10.1136/annrheumdis-2021-eular.3050

POS0487

ASSOCIATION OF RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS WITH MORTALITY IN A COHORT OF CHRONIC KIDNEY DISEASE PATIENTS

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Background: Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. RA is also associated with increased risk of chronic kidney disease (CKD) (1, 2), which is a known cardiovascular risk factor (3). We hypothesized that RA (compared with no RA) would be associated with increased risk of mortality among a cohort of patients with CKD.

Objectives: To determine the risk of mortality in RA patients with CKD.

Methods: This study was conducted using participants from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) prospective Chronic Renal Insufficiency Cohort (CRIC) study. Approximately 3600 participants were enrolled from seven US clinical centers. Patients aged 21 – 74 years with mild to moderate CKD were eligible for enrollment. The primary outcome of interest was all-cause mortality. Secondary outcomes of interest included: kidney event defined as end stage renal disease (ESRD) or 50% decline in estimated glomerular filtration rate (eGFR), myocardial infarction (MI), cerebrovascular accident (CVA), heart failure and a composite cardiovascular endpoint. The association of RA mortality over time was examined using Cox multivariate proportional hazards regression, adjusting for potential covariates (age, sex, race/ethnicity, BMI, current smoker, education).

Results: The study cohort included 492 participants with self-reported RA with a mean follow up of 9.5 years. Compared to the non-RA group, RA patients tended to be older, female, Black. Hypertension, diabetes, use of prednisone was more prevalent among the RA cohort. The unadjusted hazards ratio (HR) for mortality based on RA status was 1.45 (1.26, 1.67) but this association was attenuated after adjusting for the confounding factors [aHR 1.09 (0.94, 1.27)] (Table 1). Participants with RA had a significantly higher risk for heart failure than those without RA [aHR 1.17 (1.02, 1.34)]. We did not observe a statistically significant association between RA status and other secondary outcomes.

Table 1. Estimated hazard ratios (HR) for various outcomes from Cox proportional hazards regression for RA status

	Unadjusted	Model 1	Model 2
	HR (95% CI)	HR (95% CI)	HR (95% CI)
Death	1.45 (1.26, 1.67)	1.09 (0.94, 1.27)	1.13 (0.97, 1.32)
MI or death	1.43 (1.25, 1.63)	1.09 (0.95, 1.26)	1.15 (0.99, 1.33)
CVA or death	1.42 (1.24, 1.63)	1.07 (0.92, 1.24)	1.11 (0.95, 1.29)
CHF or death	1.54 (1.35, 1.75)	1.17 (1.02, 1.34)	1.22 (1.06, 1.40)
Composite	1.49 (1.31, 1.69)	1.13 (0.99, 1.30)	1.18 (1.03, 1.35)
Kidney event	1.09 (0.94, 1.27)	0.91 (0.78, 1.07)	1.01 (0.85, 1.20)

Model 1 adjusted for: age, sex, race/ethnicity, BMI, current smoker, education Model 2 adjusted for: model 1 + cardiovascular risk factors (urine albumin creatinine ratio, systolic blood pressure, estimated glomerular filtration rate)

Conclusion: RA was not associated with higher mortality among participants with CKD. However, RA was associated with higher rates of heart failure. Further studies evaluating the mechanisms behind this association are needed.

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Disclosure of Interests: None declared

DOI: 10.1136/annrheumdis-2021-eular.3222

POS0488

THE IMPACT OF ANTINUCLEAR ANTIBODIES INDUCED BY ANTI-TUMOUR NECROSIS FACTOR ALPHA AGENTS ON THE LONG-TERM TREATMENT OUTCOMES IN RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS PATIENTS

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Background: The seroconversion of antinuclear antibodies (ANA) induced by anti-tumour necrosis factor alpha (anti-TNF- α) therapy remains a matter of concern in various inflammatory conditions namely rheumatoid arthritis. However, evidence is still scarce regarding the impact of these autoantibodies on the clinical response to treatment in these patients.

Objectives: This study aimed to explore the impact of ANA induced by anti-TNF- α therapy on the outcomes of treatment in patients with rheumatoid arthritis over two years of follow-up.

Methods: An observational retrospective cohort study was conducted with two years of follow-up. Patients diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, according to the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) criteria, and registered on the Rheumatic Diseases Portuguese Register (Reuma.pt) who started their first anti-TNF α agent as first biologic between 2003 and 2018 were included. Patients with positive ANA (titer ≥ 100) and/or positive anti-double stranded DNA (anti-dsDNA) antibodies and/or with a diagnosis of SLE at their first visit were excluded. Demographic, clinical and laboratory data were obtained by consulting Reuma.pt. Disease Activity Score for 28 joints (DAS28), DAS28 delta, Health Assessment Questionnaire (HAQ), HAQ delta were assessed at baseline, 6, 12, 18 and 24 months. Clinical response was evaluated by EULAR criteria and three response categories were defined: good, mild and no response. The rate of switch of biological treatment was assessed over 24 months. To examine the differences between groups with and without ANA seroconversion independent samples t test for normally distributed continuous data, Mann-Whitney U-tests for non-normally distributed continuous data and Chi-square tests for categorical data were used. Logistic regression models were used to assess the effects of ANA seroconversion on clinical response to treatment

over 6, 12, 18 and 24 months.

Results: A total of 185 patients (mean age of 49.3 $\pm$ 10.9 years old; 85.4% female) with a median follow-up of 7 [4-14] years were included. We found an ANA seroconversion rate (titer ≥ 100) of 77.3% (n=143) with median time of 36 [15-72.3] months. There were no differences among groups regarding age, gender, disease duration, be seropositivity or not (for rheumatoid factor and/or anti-citrullinated protein antibodies) and have an erosive disease or not. DAS28 delta was significantly different (p=0.035) between group with positive ANA (2.01 $\pm$ 1.29) and negative ANA (1.15 $\pm$ 1.51) at 6 months. DAS28 was significantly different (p=0.014) between group with positive ANA (5.06 $\pm$ 3.39) and negative ANA (3.99 $\pm$ 1.43) at 12 months. No statistically significant differences were found in the DAS28, DAS28 delta, HAQ, HAQ delta at 18 and 24 months and in the EULAR response at any time. Switch rate was significantly different between patients with ANA seroconversion (median 1[0-1]) versus absence of seroconversion (median 0[0-1]), p=0.025. In the regression model ANA seroconversion did not predict switch rate and EULAR response over time.

Conclusion: This study showed that the majority of patients with rheumatoid arthritis treated with an anti-TNF- α agent developed ANA and that their presence may be associated with worse clinical results (DAS28) at 6 and 12 months. In fact, previous research suggested that a decrease in anti-TNF- α drug concentration due to the production of autoantibodies may lead to worse outcomes of treatment. Moreover, our data demonstrated that patients with ANA seroconversion