Alexithymia is a personal emotional disorder characterized by difficulty in identifying and describing subjective feelings and related to cognitive impairment. There is insufficient data regarding the prevalence of alexithymia in patients with RA.

Objectives: To investigate the prevalence of alexithymia and the relationship with disease activity and functional ability in patients with RA.

Methods: RA patients diagnosed according to the ACR/EULAR 2010 classification criteria. The presence of alexithymia was determined by the "Toronto Alexithymia Scale" questionnaire (TAS-20). RA activity was assessed by the Disease Activity Score (DAS28-ESR). Simplified Disease Activity Index (SDAI), Clinical Disease Activity Index (CDAI). Functional ability - by the Health Assessment Questionnaire (HAQ). In the study were included 98 patients with RA (83.7% of women). The mean age was (±SD 49.5 ± 11.7 years, the duration of the disease ranged from 1 to 21 years, and averaged 7.8 ± 4.9 years. Statistical analysis was performed by IBM Statistics SPSS 20.

Results: Among 98 examined, alexithymia (≥ 61) was detected in 24 persons (24.5%), including 23 women, mean age (±SD 54 ± 7.1 years with disease duration 9.96 ± 5.23 years. The activity of RA in persons with alexithymia was: DAS-28 (6.4 ± 0.71); SDAI (41.15 ± 8.64); CDAI (39.46 ± 9.03) and ESR (276 ± 15.1), which was significantly higher than in patients without alexithymia: DAS-28 (4.92 ± 0.15); SDAI (32.27 ± 11.29); CDAI (31.98 ± 11.07) and ESR (222 ± 12.07). Functional disability in individuals with RA and alexithymia according to HAQ was (1.7 ± 0.59) in contrast to the group of patients with RA without alexithymia - (1.04 ± 0.62). The value of TAS-20 had a direct correlation with the activity by DAS-28 (0.079; p < 0.01), SDAI (0.39; p < 0.01) and CDAI (0.39; p < 0.01), radiological stage (0.26; p < 0.01) and HAQ (0.393; p < 0.01).

Conclusion: Alexithymia is a quite common comorbid condition in patients with RA associated with disease activity and functional disability. Further studies are needed to assess the clinical significance of alexithymia in this category of patients.

REFERENCES:

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